LOST OR MUTILATED.

ACC. NO. 057583 RELIGION OF T

GEHRING A 057583
RELIGION OF THIRTY THINKER
BL-51
G31

Library
Saint Joseph's University
5600 City Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131

DEMCO

ok may be kept
1

THE RELIGION OF THIRTY GREAT THINKERS

THE RELIGION OF THIRTY GREAT THINKERS

TOGETHER WITH MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS

BY
ALBERT GEHRING

57583

BL
51
.G31

BL51.G31 ST. JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY STX
The religion of thirty great thinkers;
3 9353 00003 0161

MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
BOSTON · MASSACHUSETTS

COPYRIGHT · 1925 · BY
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY

BL51
G31

THE PLIMPTON PRESS·NORWOOD·MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

THIS volume consists of two parts, the first being an examination of the religious opinions of certain well-known thinkers, the second embodying essays on religious subjects by the author himself. One conclusion will immediately be discovered by the facetious, and that is, that the author is not in the class of the thirty great thinkers. But men are great only through comparison with those who are small, and literature includes many works, accordingly, which are not of the first rank. This by way of justification for the inclusion, under one cover, of thoughts so different in quality that the only feature they have in common is the fact that they deal with the same subject matter. In the introduction the reasons will be given which led the author to undertake the writing of the main treatise, and the nature and scope of the same will be explained.

As for the supplementary essays, the author's position, in regard to the subjects discussed, is removed from either extreme. While rejecting orthodox Christianity, he nevertheless finds much to support the cardinal doctrines of religion. In this he will likely meet with little favor: to some readers he will not seem sufficiently religious, to others not sufficiently free. However, the position he has adopted is one which has found wide acceptance among thinking men; indeed,

may be regarded as the type of belief peculiarly characteristic of such men for the past two hundred years. There is no unity between the various essays, which were written at different times and without thought of collection in a single volume. Each essay is presented individually, as it might appear in magazine form; although there is a rough connection achieved by grouping together the articles of a negative character, then proceeding to the essay on *The Genesis of Faith,* and finally passing to the treatises which are more positive in nature. *The Genesis of Faith* originally appeared in the New World, while *Grounds of Faith* is reprinted from the Hibbert Journal.

CONTENTS

THE RELIGION OF THIRTY GREAT THINKERS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION ix

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Milton (1608–1674) 3
Locke (1632–1704) 7
Descartes (1596–1650) 9
Pascal (1623–1662) 12
Spinoza (1632–1677) 14
Leibnitz (1646–1716) 18

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Berkeley (1684–1753) 23
Hume (1711–1776) 27
Voltaire (1694–1778) 31
Rousseau (1712–1778) 34
Holbach (1723–1789) 38
Kant (1724–1804) 41
Fichte (1762–1814) 45
Lessing (1729–1781) 47
Schiller (1759–1805) 50
Goethe (1749–1832) 53

NINETEENTH CENTURY

Carlyle (1795–1881) 61
John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) 65
Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) 69

PAGE

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) 72
Browning (1812–1889) 76
Comte (1798–1857) 81
Renan (1823–1892) 84
Schelling (1775–1854) 87
Hegel (1770–1831) 92
Schopenhauer (1788–1860) 96
Nietzsche (1844–1900) 99
Emerson (1803–1882) 102
Ibsen (1828–1906) 106
Tolstoi (1828–1910) 109
Conclusion 114
Appendix 119
Partial list of writings in which the religious views of the men considered in this book are laid down 123

MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS

A Statement of Unbelief 127
The Errors of Christianity 151
The Empirical Argument for Christianity . . 173
Who are the Children of God? 181
The Genesis of Faith 187
Grounds of Faith 203
The Extent of Consciousness 221
The Possibility of an After Life 241
Mental Overtones 253

INTRODUCTION

SOME time ago I became interested in religious questions, and the thought occurred to me that I should like to familiarize myself with the attitude toward these questions of the men most capable of understanding them, *i. e.*, our greatest thinkers. I expected that I could go to the nearest library and find any number of books yielding the desired information. Imagine my surprise when, after looking over various catalogues, I failed to meet with a single volume of the kind suggested. To be sure, I discovered a limited number of works dealing with the religious opinions of special groups of men. There was one, for example, which treated of the theology of the English poets; another which expounded the views of German classicists; and a third entitled "Religious Beliefs of Scientists." But none gathered the contents of all these works together and gave a collective view, however concise, of the opinions entertained by men of various ages and countries whose verdict might be considered authoritative.

Surely, a book of this kind would seem desirable. Religious questions are among the most difficult to grasp; and though everyone may finally wish to construct his own view, the opinions of recognized authorities must be welcome aids in the formation of personal conclusions.

In the absence of such works, I have attempted to offer something of the kind myself. I have chosen thirty men among our modern thinkers who are most able, by training and innate power of thought, to deal with the gigantic problems of religion, and have given short *résumés* of their views. The limitation to modern thinkers is necessary because the men of older days were hindered in the free exercise of thought by the crushing authority of ecclesiastical institutions; likewise because they lacked the knowledge of modern results of investigation which have a vital bearing on the subjects under consideration. The year 1600 has been selected as the point of demarcation between the older and newer thinkers. Strictly speaking, 1700 would have been more appropriate, as the men of the intervening century, though beginning to awaken in other respects, still showed comparatively little independence of thought in matters of religion. But by adopting the earlier date we have been able to include all the prominent philosophers since Descartes, and thus to give a complete picture of modern philosophical opinion regarding the subject of our inquiry.

An inspection of the chosen list will reveal that they belong entirely to the classes of philosophers, theologians, and writers. These, it seems, are most competent to give authoritative opinions. A man may be an eminent musician, artist, inventor, or even scientist, without having the knowledge necessary for the thorough understanding of deep theoretic questions; indeed, the faculties involved in some of these cases seem to be of so special a nature as not to require much "thinking" at all, in the more profound sense of

the term. Even among the class of writers only such men have been selected as have exhibited a decided theoretic or spiritual bent; individuals like Burns and Heine, whose trend was more specifically artistic or emotional, have been passed over in favor of others like Browning and Schiller, who can be included among the philosophers as well as poets.

As to the exact composition of the list, there will of course be diversity of opinion. Some of the thinkers adduced may be considered inferior, in power of thought, to others who have been omitted. Probably no list could be compiled which would meet with universal approbation. Nevertheless, there will likely be agreement as to the great majority of names. The dozen or more of technical "philosophers" certainly are foremost in their realm, as a glance at the chapter headings of any history of philosophy will show; and surely nobody would exclude men like Mill, Carlyle, Voltaire, Emerson, Tolstoi, and the German classicists. So then, the differences of opinion would likely crystallize only about a half dozen or so of the men; while all without exception will unquestionably be allowed to rank as authorities entitled to speak on the subjects considered.

Only in the case of Holbach have we introduced a man who did not personally attain the greatest prominence. But in his case we are dealing with the representative of a highly influential group of men. The French Encyclopedists of the 18th century, of whom Holbach may be regarded as the mouthpiece, played so important a part in the history of modern thought, that a collective *résumé* of their opinions is not merely

permissible in a treatise of this kind, but even necessary.

In setting forth the views of these men, we have confined ourselves to simple, concise statements of essentials. Had we endeavored to explain the subtle philosophical systems of a Fichte or Schopenhauer, for example, our book would have assumed forbidding dimensions. Besides, it would have failed of its central purpose; which is, to sum up in few and intelligible words how the great thinkers of the modern world stand in regard to the cardinal questions of religion.

These questions have been reduced to two. In the first place, and essentially, we want to know how the men under consideration regard the teachings of Christianity: can they be classed, on the whole, as orthodox believers, or must they be included among the class of unbelievers? And if the latter, secondly, do they fall into the group of atheists, or do they still retain beliefs which may be designated as religious? More especially, and by way of criterion as to religious belief, do they avow the existence of a God, and do they proclaim the immortality of the soul?

Christianity is understood as it has been taught traditionally throughout the centuries, not as it is coming to be viewed by many of its modern exponents. Though making use of the same historical material, the Christianity of certain recent theologians is a thing so unlike, in essentials, that which was formerly taught under the name, that it can hardly be classed as the same religion,—if indeed it can still be called a religion at all. This is not the place to consider which interpretation of Christianity, the old or the new, is correct; and so we shall merely regard and designate that as

Christianity which has immemorially been called by the name, and which was promulgated from the pulpits at the time when most of our thinkers lived.

In presenting the views of these thinkers, we have made liberal use of quotation. By so doing we have not only brought together a list of characteristic statements and thoughts, which may be welcome to many readers, but have also lessened the possibility of a misrepresentation of doctrines. May the summaries which follow be of help to those of our readers who are earnestly seeking for instruction regarding the important problems of religion.

THE RELIGION OF THIRTY GREAT THINKERS

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

MILTON

IN the case of most seventeenth century thinkers, it will not be possible to do more than announce their agreement with the doctrines of the church, which of course involved a belief in God and immortality. The occidental world was still under the sway of an ecclesiastical tradition which had lasted a thousand years, and which made any radical deviation therefrom extremely difficult. The ordinary alternatives of the time were not those between belief and unbelief, but only between different forms of belief. A man might be a Catholic, Lutheran or Calvinist, but his Christianity was assumed as a matter of course. It was almost as unthinkable for him to embrace non-Christian principles as for a person in our midst to adopt the Mohammedan faith. Indeed, in some respects the difficulty was even greater. The only obstacles to such an adoption today are of an intellectual nature; but a renunciation of the church in former centuries brought with it, not only the threat of eternal punishment in the life to come, but the certainty of ignominy and persecution in the present world. The fires which had consumed Bruno and Servetus were hardly extinguished, and Galileo's recantation was echoing in the ears of men. The methods of persecution were becoming milder, to be sure, and toleration was beginning to spread its light, but there was still so much of stigma and legal

restriction put in the way of unbelievers that a departure from established views demanded considerable moral and physical courage.[1]

However, it was not the threat of worldly disaster that kept John Milton within the bounds of faith, but sincere, unfaltering conviction. His views on divorce were radical, to be sure, and he embraced opinions concerning the Saviour that placed him among the followers of Arius. Nevertheless, he was firm in his belief in the Bible. Even the opinions in which he deviated from the multitude were the result of strict interpretation of that book. "Let us discard reason in sacred matters," he says, "and follow the doctrine of Holy Scripture exclusively." [2] His views could doubtless be deduced from his famous epics, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. But we also have a prose work from his pen, entitled *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, in which he has expressed himself on theological questions with the greatest clearness; and it seems preferable to base our examination on this unmistakable depositary of belief, rather than to use a work in which theoretical convictions are clothed in the words of poetry.

The work in question is a lengthy treatise, covering over six hundred pages. A peculiar circumstance is the fact that, although the existence of the treatise was known in Milton's lifetime, it disappeared from view and was not discovered again until the recent date of 1823. The first part of the work treats of the Knowl-

[1] See Appendix.

[2] *Milton's Prose Works*, George Bell and Sons, London, 1887, Vol. IV, p. 87.

edge of God, the second of his Worship. A characteristic feature is the extensive employment of Biblical quotations. All conclusions, indeed, are based directly on the words of Holy Writ, and reason merely serves to elucidate what is obscure or open to dispute in the same. Accordingly, we find that Milton is a thorough believer in Christian doctrine, without the slightest taint of skepticism. To be sure, his reliance on authority sometimes leads him to conclusions which were at variance with beliefs generally held. Thus he defends polygamy, as being in harmony with Biblical precedent. He rejects the contention that the Christian Sunday is merely a transferred Sabbath, to be kept after the manner of the Jews. And he shares the views of Arius, as mentioned, according to which the Son is inferior to the Father. But he does not go to the length of the Socinians, who deny the divinity of Christ.

His belief in a Deity is based, apart from the authority of Holy Writ, on the arguments from design and from the moral nature in man. "There can be no doubt but that everything in the world, by the beauty of its order, and the evidence of a determinate and beneficial purpose which pervades it, testifies that some supreme efficient Power must have pre-existed, by which the whole was ordained for a specific end . . . the existence of God is further proved by that feeling, whether we term it conscience, or right reason, which even in the worst of characters, is not altogether extinguished. If there were no God, there would be no distinction between right and wrong; the estimate of virtue and vice would entirely depend on the blind opinion of men; none would follow virtue, none would be

restrained from vice by any sense of shame, or fear of the laws, unless conscience or right reason did from time to time convince every one, however unwilling, of the existence of God, the Lord and ruler of all things, to whom, sooner or later, each must give an account of his own actions, whether good or bad." [1]

Personally, Milton had some peculiar ideas as to the external observances of religion, at least in his later years. He did not attend divine services, and failed to insist on family prayers in his home.[2] But this did not impair the reality of his faith, which was sincere and genuine. He was a Christian pure and simple, without qualification of his essential creed or fluctuation in his sense of certitude.

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 14–15.

[2] See *The Poetical Works of John Milton,* Belford, Clarke & Co., Chicago and New York, 1884, p. xlv.

LOCKE

OF Locke, too, there is not much to say: he was a believer in God, immortality, and the Bible. His belief in the existence of a deity, which he characterizes as the "most obvious truth that reason discovers," and which for him is "equal to mathematical certainty," is based on the so-called cosmological argument. The world cannot have been created out of nothing; it must have had an antecedent something containing all its powers and possibilities; but since the world contains consciousness as well as matter and motion, this antecedent must likewise have been conscious; so that we are justified in positing, as the causal basis of the world, "an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being." [1]

This Being is not conceived after the manner of the deists, as the object of natural religion, but communes with men in special revelations, under which term Locke of course has reference to the writings of the Bible. These carry absolute authority with them, whether the results "agree or disagree with common experience." To be sure, he adds, we must be certain that the revelation is really of divine origin. Hence no revelation can have greater authority than the clear in-

[1] See Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1894. Quotations from works of The Clarendon Press are made with the permission of the Oxford University Press, as publishers.

sights of reason; for we can never have more coercive evidence for the supernatural origin of revelation than for the things which reason itself pronounces true. But where a thing transcends reason, or where reason does not carry us beyond mere probability, there revelation, when we are convinced of its authenticity, must be accepted as a guide to truth.

Considering the times in which he lived, to be sure, even the unskeptical and orthodox attitude of Locke was liberal. He wrote in defense of toleration, and worked toward a unification of the various Christian sects in which the minute points on which they differed should be merged in the big underlying truths which they had in common. His Biblical criticism, likewise, was broad and rational, prefiguring the higher criticism of today. Hence we may regard it as likely that he would have swerved from the strict teachings of the church, had he lived at a later day. But we must take him as he is,—a child of the seventeenth century,—and thus we must characterize him as a thoroughgoing theist and an undoubted believer in the doctrines of the Christian religion.

DESCARTES

DESCARTES, in point of birth the first in our list of great thinkers, also stands for one of the foremost intellects of modern times. He was a brilliant mathematician, being famous as the creator of analytic geometry. But his main distinction rests on the fact that he is the father of modern philosophy. It is to him that we owe the celebrated deduction *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), which may be regarded as the starting point both of his own speculations and of modern philosophy in general.

Like most thinkers of his century, he was a believer in God and an adherent of Christianity. Indeed, creative mind as he was, he showed his originality in this direction as well, and enriched the world with a new argument for the existence of the Deity. This is the so-called ontological proof, which, although advanced centuries before by Anselm of Canterbury, is generally accredited to Descartes, because of the clear and influential statement it received from him. According to this argument, the existence of God is inferred from the idea which we have of him. I can only have received the idea of a being more perfect than myself from a being who actually is more perfect; and this is God. The argument was first brought forward in the famous *Discourse on Method.* The following quota-

tion, from the *Principles of Philosophy,* serves to show the deference of our thinker to the revelations of the Bible:

"We must impress on our memory the infallible rule, that what God has revealed is incomparably more certain than anything else; and that we ought to submit our belief to the Divine authority rather than to our own judgment, even although perhaps the light of reason should, with the greatest clearness and evidence, appear to suggest to us something contrary to what is revealed." [1]

The quotation also illustrates the opposition which was felt by 17th century thinkers to exist between the truths of revelation and those of reason. We have already had occasion to note this in the cases of Milton and Locke. The whole matter, indeed, seems to have given the writers of this time a good deal of trouble. As yet, reason was kept in subjection, and where there was a conflict with revelation, it was obliged to yield. But the time was to come when this should be reversed, and already in Voltaire, who was born within a century of the men in question, we have reason stepping forward and serving as a criterion of the truth or untruth of religion.

Descartes, as we have said, was a thorough-going Christian, but the whole tenor of his nature and writings was such as to give rise to the suspicion that, had he lived a century or two later, he would have relinquished his orthodoxy. It is a question in our mind,

[1] Descartes, *The Method, Meditations, and Selections from the Principles,* William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1897, p. 230.

indeed, whether his theological utterances may not have been prompted partly by worldly caution and fear. The experiences of Galileo, for example, are known to have made a deep impression on him. His philosophy tended toward a mechanical view of the universe, which, when carried to its logical conclusions, was likely to clash with the received views of a special Providence. It is this feature of his work which displeased his countryman Pascal. "In all his philosophy," he says, "he would have been quite willing to dispense with God. But he had to make Him give a fillip to set the world in motion; beyond this, he has no further need of God." [1] The time was not yet ripe, however, for a complete break with the established faith, and so Descartes still continued to nestle under the wings of the Church. In our next sketch, on this same Pascal, we shall see the contrast of a man who was imbued with religion to the core, and to whom it was a primary concern of existence.

[1] Pascal, *Thoughts,* London, 1904, No. 77. Quoted by permission of J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. and E. P. Dutton & Company.

PASCAL

OF all the men whom we are considering, none was more truly religious than Pascal. Religion in his case was not merely an affair of the mind, but permeated his entire being. It was the guiding star of his existence, determining his ideals and shaping his conduct. For it he not only gave up his worldly pleasures, but even neglected those higher intellectual pursuits for which he was so eminently fitted.

"I hold out my arms to my *Redeemer,*" he said, "who, having been foretold for four thousand years, has come to suffer and to die for me on earth, at the time and under all the circumstances foretold. By His grace, I await death in peace, in the hope of being eternally united to Him. Yet I live with joy, whether in the prosperity which it pleases Him to bestow upon me, or in the adversity which He sends for my good, and which He has taught me to bear by His example." [1]

The religion in which Pascal thus found consolation was thoroughly Christian and orthodox, embracing all the usual tenets of the church regarding miracles, prophecies, and the like. Our author is firmly convinced of the reality of these things, and doubt in regard to them seems never to have entered his mind.

It is to Pascal that we owe the celebrated "wager"

[1] Pascal, *Thoughts,* London, 1904, No. 737. Quoted by permission of J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. and E. P. Dutton & Company.

concerning the realities of the Unseen. Does God exist or not? Reason cannot give us the answer. Yet we cannot avoid a decision. We are adrift in life, and a choice is necessary. How then shall we decide? By a consideration of practical results. If we decide that God exists, we may gain everything, while losing nothing. But if we decide that he does not exist, we may lose everything. It behooves us, therefore, to cast our lot in favor of his existence. And if we are nevertheless unable to do this, through logical obstacles, we must act as if we believed, take part in religious observances, and the like, and belief will follow as a matter of course.

The solution thus proposed may seem irrational to many people: it may appear unworthy of a thinking being to make the deepest concern of existence the subject of a mere bet. And in fact, much criticism has been directed at this feature of Pascal's philosophy. But it is not for us to take sides: we are merely presenting the views of great thinkers as we find them, and without comment. And so we submit the reasonings of Pascal, likewise, as a unique contribution to the practical aspect of the problem.

SPINOZA

ONE of the most interesting in our list of thinkers is Spinoza. He was descended from a family of Portuguese Jews, who had migrated to Holland for the sake of religious liberty. But even in this land of comparative freedom he was not without his trials and persecutions. Having developed views of a heterodox nature, he was excommunicated from the church of his fathers amid great commotion and execration; indeed, it is related that an attempt had even been made upon his life. The philosophy which he worked out in the course of a quiet, retired existence was destined to be of the greatest influence on the world of thought. But his religious views are peculiarly difficult to state. By many he has been called an atheist. And to be sure, the God of whom he speaks has few of the traditional characteristics. There is nothing anthropomorphic about him, none of that personal, fatherly relation to the race that we are wont to attribute to the Deity. On the other hand, we are not justified in identifying his God with nature. For nature is mechanical and unfeeling, while the "substance" of Spinoza has consciousness for an attribute. But this consciousness, once more, must not be conceived after the fashion of the theist. With the latter God is a spirit, and consciousness represents the essence of his being. In the case of the "substance,"

consciousness is merely coördinate with extension, and both of these, again, are but two of its many attributes.

A similar difficulty obtains in stating Spinoza's views on immortality. At the end of his *Ethics* he says: "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but there remains of it something which is eternal." [1] This, however, can hardly be conceived as a personal immortality, for he likewise says: "The mind can only imagine anything, or remember what is past, while the body endures." [2] Viewing the matter in connection with the further statement that "in God there is necessarily an idea, which expresses the essence of this or that human body under the form of eternity," [3] we may perhaps interpret Spinoza to mean that there is something in us that mirrors or partakes of God's idea of us, and that insofar as we experience this we are immortal. But it would seem to be depth or quality of experience that he has in mind, rather than temporal duration.

His views on the Bible and revelation are laid down in his "Theologico-political Treatise." We marvel, in reading this book, at the advanced opinions therein expressed; indeed, if we were not aware that the work was written 250 years ago, we might imagine we were studying a product of modern criticism. An idea of the contents may be gained from the following quotations:—

"We can only judge a man faithful or unfaithful by his works. If his works be good, he is faithful,

[1] *Spinoza's Works*, George Bell and Sons, London, 1891, Vol. II, p. 259.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 259.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

however much his doctrines may differ from those of the rest of the faithful: if his works be evil, though he may verbally conform, he is unfaithful.[1] . . . As for the Christian rites, such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, festivals, public prayers, and any other observances which are, and always have been, common to all Christendom, if they were instituted by Christ or His Apostles (which is open to doubt), they were instituted as external signs of the universal church, and not as having anything to do with blessedness, or possessing any sanctity in themselves.[2] . . . Miracles are only intelligible as in relation to human opinions, and merely mean events of which the natural cause cannot be explained by a reference to any ordinary occurrence.[3] . . . To say that everything happens according to natural laws, and to say that everything is ordained by the decree and ordinance of God, is the same thing." [4]

The essential teaching of the book with reference to the truth and function of Holy Writ, seems to be that the Bible is not to be regarded as a depository of scientific or philosophic truth, but as a guide to right living. Conduct, rather than knowledge, is the object of its communications. "It demands from men nothing but obedience, and censures obstinacy, but not ignorance." [5]

In the mode of life pointed out by Spinoza as yielding the highest happiness, we have an approximation

[1] *Spinoza's Works,* George Bell and Sons, London, 1891, Vol. I, p. 185.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 76.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 84.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 45.
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 176.

to the state of blessedness which is frequently the result of religious conversion, but which in Spinoza's case seems to have been either natural or arrived at without any special inner crisis. A similar state is attained by some people through a process analogous to conversion, but not religious in any specific or formal sense. We shall recur to this point in the course of our investigation.

LEIBNITZ

GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNITZ, probably the most versatile thinker of modern times, was born in the year 1646, two years before the close of the thirty years' war. Accordingly, he was a full-fledged child of the seventeenth century, and subject to all the religious influences of that time. True, we are told that at his funeral "no minister of religion was present; for Leibnitz was *parcus deorum cultor et infrequens,* and his absence from church was counted to him for irreligion, so that from priests and people he got the nickname *Lővenix* (the Low German for *Glaubet nichts,* believer in nothing)." [1] But this does not detract from the testimony of his writings, which show that he was a thorough believer in the truths of religion.

"In addition to the world or aggregate of finite things," says he, "there is some unique Being who governs, not only like the soul in me, or rather like the Ego itself in my body, but in a much higher relation. For one Being dominating the universe not only rules the world but he creates and fashions it, is superior to the world, and, so to speak, extra mundane, and by this very fact is the ultimate reason of things." [2]

[1] Latta, *Leibniz, The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings,* The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1898, p. 16.

[2] *The Philosophical Works of Leibnitz,* Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor, New Haven, 1890, p. 100.

Not only, however, did Leibnitz subscribe to the belief in God and immortality, he was also an adherent of Christian teachings. He defended the doctrine of the Trinity, as likewise the belief in the possibility of miracles and in eternal punishment. He labored assiduously in behalf of the movement to bring about a union between Protestants and Catholics,—though without effect, as history teaches. One of the most widely known of his works is the *Theodicy*. In this he attempts to show that the universe as it exists is the best possible world. It is a classic treatise on optimism, and though its conclusions have frequently been assailed, there is no denying that it abounds with novel and suggestive reasonings.

With Leibnitz we have come to the end of our seventeenth century thinkers. Barring a single exception, they have been theists and believers in the Christian religion. Spinoza was the only individual to stand apart from the group. But in his case the nonconformity, we imagine, was due to the fact that he was a Jew. From now on we shall notice a decided change. Berkeley, who is still rooted in the seventeenth century, will once more repeat the familiar formula, but after we have passed him, we shall rarely meet with another writer who subscribes unconditionally to the accepted doctrines of Christianity.

THE RELIGION OF THIRTY GREAT THINKERS

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BERKELEY

BERKELEY was born in 1684 and died in 1753. Although thus falling within the eighteenth century, his roots extended into the seventeenth. He is the oldest of the ten men who constitute our group of eighteenth century thinkers. Besides him, the only one of these men to be born in the seventeenth century is Voltaire (1694–1778); the remaining eight come after the year 1700. This may account for Berkeley's theological views, which coincide rather with those of the thinkers before his time than with those of the men who followed. Of the six thinkers preceding Berkeley, practically all, we have seen, were believers in God, as likewise Christians in a more or less orthodox sense. But of the twenty-four who have lived since, Berkeley is the only one who is strictly and unmistakably orthodox in his belief. The majority of the twenty-four may broadly be called religious, to be sure, and some may even be classed as Christians in a loose and liberal sense, but none subscribed unquestionably to the strict and traditional interpretation of Christianity. Hence it is plausible that our philosopher was influenced considerably, in forming his opinions, by the views that were current in the century of his birth.

Another peculiarity of Berkeley is the fact that he is the only one of our thirty men who can be classed as

a theologian, *i. e.*, who was an official of the church for any considerable period of time.

Berkeley's unique position in the realm of philosophy is due to the fact that he is the promulgator of the world-view known as idealism. In general, there are three ways of conceiving the world. To begin with, we may classify things as both mental and material. Our feelings, perceptions and ideas belong to the first category, the realm of objects and matter constitutes the second. This is the division made by Descartes; and it is a plausible, common-sense way of conceiving the universe, although serious difficulties arise as soon as we endeavor to explain the interaction between the two realms. Another way of describing the universe is to say that matter is fundamental, and mind is merely one of its manifestations. This is also a natural, common-sense view. It is based on the fact that the abiding mass of the universe is made up of matter, while mind is apparently of a sporadic, fleeting nature; likewise on the well-known correspondence between thoughts and brain activities, and the apparent dependence of the former on the latter. A third alternative is to turn the tables about and declare that mind is fundamental, while matter is dependent on it. At first this seems to be a fantastic view, and as a matter of fact it required centuries of thought and speculation to bring it before the Occidental world, although the Oriental religions seem to have grasped it long ago. It is based on considerations like those of the actual mental nature of the so-called secondary qualities (sound, light, etc.), and on the deeper reasoning that we know nothing whatever of the world, unless it has

first passed through the doors of perception. It is the view which has been upheld by the majority of great philosophers since Berkeley's time, notably by the German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer). Berkeley, as said, is the one to have brought forward this view in the Occident, and he bases his conclusions on the most ingenious, subtle reasonings, into which, however, we cannot at present enter. Nor are we concerned so much with the view as such, as rather with its religious ramifications. In Berkeley's hands, the philosophy which he has developed becomes a stout weapon with which to combat atheism and fortify the belief in God. Matter, he says, does not exist by itself, but only as it is perceived by sentient beings. However, it does not follow herefrom that the world is merely my private dream or hallucination. No, there are things that exist beyond me, only they are not of a "material" nature. They exist in a mind, but as they do not exist in my private mind alone, or in those of other finite beings, there must be an overarching Divine Mind which is the basis of their being.

"Sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in a mind or spirit. Whence I conclude, not that they have no real existence, but that, seeing they depend not on my thought, and have an existence distinct from being perceived by me, *there must be some other mind wherein they exist.* As sure, therefore, as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent Spirit, who contains and supports it." [1]

Berkeley's idealistic philosophy was also the basis

[1] *Berkeley's Works,* The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1871, Vol. I, p. 304.

of his belief in immortality, of which he was a fervent defender. He was a stout champion of the Christian religion, and one of his works, *Alciphron: or The Minute Philosopher,* was written as an apology for the same, "against those who are called Free-Thinkers." The date of publication was 1732, and the book was called forth by the growing tendency toward skepticism and unbelief at the time it was written. The subjection of reason to faith, of which we have spoken on a previous page, was coming to an end, and the spirit of inquiry was extending even to religious matters. Berkeley, however, was still rooted in the ancient beliefs. He was a Christian pure and simple, and he seems never to have entertained any serious doubts concerning the doctrines which he taught as a servant of the church.

HUME

IN Hume, the greatest of English philosophers, we see the change of thought which had characterized the passing of the seventeenth century. Whereas most of the thinkers previously considered were adherents of Christianity, as has been said, Hume is generally recognized as an opponent of the established creed; by some, indeed, he is even classed as an atheist.

One of his most widely known writings on religious topics is the essay on Miracles. This is a classic utterance, and has been the basis of endless controversies. The substance of the essay is to be found in the idea that the truth or falsity of a statement must be tested with a reference to the reliability underlying statements in general. Experience is the basis of our trust in the words of others. But when the thing that is stated runs counter to experience, we must weigh the opposing probabilities, and decide accordingly. People as a rule tell the truth; but they also lie at times, and they are often deceived. So when a thing is vouched for which is utterly opposed to experience, we must ask ourselves: is it more likely that this unheard-of thing really occurred, or that somebody lied or was deluded? So far as miracles are concerned, which run contrary to experiences so uniform as to be dignified by the term laws of nature, there can be no evidence strong enough to make us believe in their occurrence.

In spite of this anti-biblical reasoning, it appears from various passages in his writings that Hume believed in a deity, whose traces are visible in the marks of design throughout nature. "Though the stupidity of men, barbarous and uninstructed, be so great, that they may not see a sovereign author in the more obvious works of nature, to which they are so much familiarized; yet it scarcely seems possible, that any one of good understanding should reject that idea, when once it is suggested to him." [1]

To be sure, as Huxley points out, statements like these are so emphatically contradicted by other conclusions of Hume's philosophy, as to leave them with but little force.[2] Whether or not Hume was aware of these contradictions, I would not attempt to decide.

A peculiar dilemma of this kind forces itself on the reader who studies the arguments of the little essay: *Of the Immortality of the Soul.* The essay begins as follows:

"By the mere light of reason it seems difficult to prove the Immortality of the Soul. The arguments for it are commonly derived either from *metaphysical* topics, or *moral, or physical.* But in reality, it is the gospel, and the gospel alone, that has brought life and immortality to light." [3]

Then follow condensed reasonings which either destroy the force of current arguments for immortality,

[1] Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary,* Longmans, Green and Company, 1912, Vol. II, p. 361.

[2] See Huxley, *Hume,* D. Appleton and Company, 1914, p. 173 *et seq.*

[3] Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary,* Longmans, Green and Company, Vol. II, p. 399.

or tend positively to prove the mortality of the soul. We are told that the soul, if immortal, must likewise have been preëxistent. But as we are in no wise affected by what happened before our birth, the same will probably be true of the after life as well. The body and soul vary together: fluctuations in the one are accompanied by fluctuations in the other. Hence it is natural to conclude that the destruction of the former will be accompanied by a similar destruction of its concomitant. Animals show great analogy to human beings, yet we do not believe in their immortality. As for eternal punishments, they are so utterly out of proportion to the offenses committed, that they are beyond justification.

Now, after proving by every argument within his reach that immortality is improbable, Hume suddenly swings about and concludes the essay with the following remarkable statement: "Nothing could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations which mankind have to Divine revelation; since we find, that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth." [1] It is improbable that Hume really believed in the message of revelation, otherwise he would not have written concerning miracles as he did. The conclusion is plausible, therefore, that he was not convinced by the Biblical statements concerning immortality, but introduced them for special reasons. Possibly he abstained from direct assertions from prudential motives, and chose this ingenious method of imparting his thoughts.

All in all, we may conclude with Huxley, that Hume was not overburdened theologically. We are

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 406.

merely justified, on the basis of his writings, in attributing to him a belief in a deity. But it does not seem that he shared the belief in the soul's immortality, and he was certainly not a Christian in the narrow, accepted meaning of the term.

VOLTAIRE

VOLTAIRE is known as one of the sharpest and most effective opponents of the Christian faith. Many years of his life were devoted to the task of crushing *"l'infâme,"* as he called the church. For this he has been criticised severely. But, though he was unsparing in his attacks and availed himself of every resource of sarcasm and ridicule at his command, it must be remembered that his warfare was largely called forth by and directed at the abuses of the church. That these were numerous is well known to everyone familiar with French history. One of the occurrences which were especially effective in arousing Voltaire's indignation was the judicial murder by the authorities of Toulouse of a Protestant citizen named Jean Calas. He devoted years of investigation and agitation to this matter, and finally succeeded in having the verdict overthrown and the dead man's innocence established. Dogmatically, too, the church was narrow and severe in Voltaire's day, and tolerance was a virtue but little practised by its votaries. So that, if the criticisms and arguments of our philosopher were at times rather superficial, failing to take account of the deeper nature of religion, we must remember that he fought against teachings and pretensions that were by no means characterized by the opposite qualities. Furthermore, it is a mistake to classify Voltaire as an

atheist. He was firmly convinced of the existence of a deity, and was vigorous in his opposition to those who would do away with all religion whatsoever.

Voltaire's views were embodied in numerous treatises, which were often circulated secretly, on account of the bold and unusual nature of their contents. The following are a few characteristic utterances selected from the writings of this keen controversialist.

"Is the book of *Genesis* to be taken literally or allegorically? Did God really take a rib from Adam and make woman therewith? and, if so, why is it previously stated that he made man male and female? How did God create light before the sun? How did he separate light from darkness, since darkness is merely the absence of light? How could there be a day before the sun was made? How was the firmament made amid the waters, since there is no such thing as a firmament?" [1] "We owe great respect to David, who was a man after God's heart; but I fear I am not learned enough to justify, by ordinary laws, the conduct of David in associating with four hundred men of evil ways, and burdened with debt, as the Scripture says; in going to sack the house of the king's servant Nabal, and marrying his widow a week later; in offering his services to Achish, the king's enemy, and spreading fire and blood over the land of the allies of Achish, without sparing either age or sex; in taking new concubines as soon as he is on the throne; and, not content with these concubines, in stealing Bathsheba from her

[1] Voltaire, *Toleration and Other Essays,* (translated by Jos. McCabe), New York and London, 1912, p. 185. The quotations from this volume are made with the permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

husband, whom he not only dishonours, but slays." [1]

As is apparent, Voltaire exhibited in detail what is contrary to reason and morality in the Holy Scriptures. He exposed contradictions, ridiculed errors, and condemned misdeeds, even when performed with the sanction of religion. But there was a more positive side to his reasonings, as we have said, and the two following passages give evidence thereof.

"There is a single, universal, and powerful intelligence, acting always by invariable laws." [2] "O God, keep from us the error of atheism which denies thy existence, and deliver us from the superstition that outrages thy existence and fills ours with horror." [3]

Like Rousseau, of whom we shall speak in a moment, our thinker held fast to the belief in a supreme being at a time when atheism and materialism were claiming the allegiance of so many of his countrymen. His position, in short, was that of the man who avoids both extremes; and though he devoted more of his energy to the demolition of superstition and dogma, he was also assiduous in combating what he considered to be the dangerous spread of infidelity.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 209.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

ROUSSEAU

ROUSSEAU'S views on religion were in decided contrast to those of the men among whom he lived. While atheism was the watchword of the day, Rousseau proclaimed his belief in the reality of higher things. And yet, though he had the courage to lift his voice in defense of doctrines which were deemed outworn, it was his fate to be hounded in the name of that which he defended. Certain views which he had published being in conflict with the narrower teachings of the church, he was obliged to flee from France. He passed from place to place, being persecuted wherever he went, until he finally found refuge across the English Channel.

His views are embodied in a section of his well-known work on education entitled *Émile*. The first part of this "confession" is positive, the second is largely negative. In the first we have a statement of belief as to the essentials of religion, the second is a criticism of revelation.

Rousseau is fully convinced of the existence of God. The argument which he advances to support his faith is similar to that of Locke's, referred to on a previous page. Dead matter cannot account for a universe containing motion and intelligence, chance cannot explain the beautiful adaptations manifested in the world about us. As to immortality, the body may

be destroyed and the soul continue to live. These views form a sort of natural religion. He is surprised that there should be any need of revealed religion. The former is sufficient in regard to essentials, and so far as the externals of worship are concerned, that is a matter which can be arranged without recourse to revelation. His main criticism of revelation is, that there are so many difficulties in the way of our recognizing and believing it, that it would be unjust to make our lot in eternity depend on that recognition and belief. There are so many books to be examined, sources and dates to be verified, errors to be guarded against, falsifications to be excluded, that it would take a lifetime to work one's way through such a mass of materials. There would be no time for anything else. People would be obliged to give up their occupations and ceaselessly wander about from country to country, in order to make their verifications at the source. And even then they would be fortunate if, when they came to die, they had arrived at any definite conclusions.

As to the doctrine of eternal punishment, Rousseau's judgment remains in abeyance, though he inclines toward its rejection. In regard to Christ and the gospels, however, he is more favorable to traditional views. "Can a book at once so grand and so simple be the work of men? Is it possible that he whose history is contained in this book is no more than man? . . . if the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Christ are those of a God." [1]

[1] Rousseau, *Emile*, pp. 271 and 272. Quoted by permission of J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. and E. P. Dutton & Company.

But as to the great body of doctrines taught by the Christian religion, his verdict remains suspended. He finds much that speaks for the same, much that points against. In consequence, he refuses to take sides, and rests satisfied with the conclusions which reason alone has taught him to accept. But he believes in adhering to the religious practices to which one is accustomed, or at least in allowing others to do so without interference. Such externalities, he contends, may have their special reasons, in time, place, government and the like, and should not lightly be thrown overboard. For we can never be sure that it will be good for people to reject the religious ceremonies which are enjoined by the laws, while we are sure that it is wrong to break the laws.

A certain inconsistency in Rousseau's views may be mentioned, in spite of our general purpose of abstaining from critical remarks. If the life and death of Christ are those of a God, and the gospels are not the work of men, how can we have any doubts as to revelation? Why all the preceding uncertainty and argument, as to which is the true religion? Admit the superhuman authorship of the books on which the New Testament is based, and the whole question, it seems, is forthwith settled. We must then accept everything that is recorded in the writings under consideration, and the truth of Christianity is at once established.

However, ignoring this inconsistency, we wish to express our admiration for the courage with which this French enthusiast proclaimed both his words of assent and of dissent, and likewise for the eloquence of the language in which he clothed his words. As for the

content of his message, he is a typical example of the modern spirit; he illustrates what we shall henceforth observe with the greatest regularity: belief in the fundamentals of religion, coupled with a rejection of all that is narrow and dogmatic in the same.

HOLBACH

THE subject of this sketch, as mentioned in the introduction, has not been included in the present volume because he was personally one of the greatest thinkers, but rather because he was the representative of a highly influential group of men. Some of these belonged to the "Encyclopedists" who made France famous during the eighteenth century, and all were mouthpieces of the ideas characterizing the French "illumination." The illumination also included men like Voltaire, to be sure, who did not share the destructive religious views of their more radical *confrères,* but on the whole its philosophy was characterized by an atheistic and materialistic trend. Condillac, Helvetius, Diderot, and La Mettrie were some of the writers who typified the movement. Condillac carried to their legitimate conclusions the ideas of Locke as to the sensational origin of our mental life, though still retaining the belief in a deity. Helvetius reduced the springs of conduct to self-interest or pleasure. La Mettrie boldly proclaimed the doctrine of philosophic materialism and designated the soul as a function of the body. Holbach, finally, summed up these various lines of thought in the *System of Nature,* which has been called the atheists' Bible, and which may be regarded as the confession of faith of the illumination in its final consummation.

There is some doubt as to the authorship of this work. Various men probably collaborated in its preparation, such as Diderot, Lagrange and Grimm, but the work as a whole is generally ascribed to the Baron von Holbach, at whose hospitable board many of the foremost thinkers of the day were wont to congregate. It is here that Hume on a certain occasion expressed doubt as to the existence of atheists, whereupon he was informed by his genial host that he was even then dining in the company of seventeen such men. The work was highly treasured by Shelley, at least in his youth, but Goethe found it uncongenial, by reason of the cold and mechanical view of the world which it expressed.

Atheism is the creed taught by the *System of Nature*. Religion is condemned, not only because it was false, but because it was believed to have added to the misery of the world. And progress was to be attained through the abandonment of all creeds. Man is a material creature. Freedom of the will does not exist. Thought is a product of his brain, and fails to outlive its physiological support. Self-interest and pleasure are the only ultimate ends of action, but this does not justify ignoble modes of life, for our truest interest involves a consideration of the interests of others.

There can be no doubt that the destructive character of these views, so far as religion is concerned, had its basis in the abuses of the church, which were real, and which we had occasion to note when speaking of Voltaire. Men were tired of intolerance and superstition, and were longing to be freed from the fetters by which they had so long been held chained. They were sincere

in the belief that human reason alone, without the aid of tradition or authority, would lead to the golden age. They shot beyond the mark of course. The philosophy of the illumination was superficial and one-sided, and religion was more deeply rooted in the mind than it had imagined. But it served its purpose at the time. It was a phase of thought that was honestly held, and that produced lasting results, both theoretically and practically, of a most profound and beneficial character.

KANT

FROM France we pass to Germany, and are at once met by an intellectual luminary of the first magnitude. Kant may be regarded as the greatest of modern philosophers, if not indeed the greatest of all times. Hence his religious views are of especial interest.

A prominent part of his work, *The Critique of Pure Reason,* is that in which he destroys the validity of the traditional arguments for the existence of a deity, *i.e.,* the so-called cosmological, teleological, and ontological proofs. It was his opinion that the existence of God could not be demonstrated. However, it does not follow that he disbelieved in God. Though insusceptible of proof, both God and immortality are, according to him, implications of our moral nature. The moral law exists, and demands unconditional obedience. And though the idea of happiness as the result of obedience must not enter into the motives impelling us toward moral action, happiness ought reasonably to be conjoined with such action. However, since this demand is not satisfied in our mundane life, we must postulate another life in which it may be, and a God who will guarantee the satisfaction.

This moral argument for the existence of God is an important contribution to the thought of our times, and

has had the greatest influence on the philosophy subsequent to Kant's day.

The philosopher's views regarding the more intimate questions of theology are laid down in the book entitled *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft.* In general, it may be said that he does not accept Christianity literally, but agrees with its essence and spirit. He clothes his own ideas regarding the true religion in the forms and terminology of Christianity; though the result at times seems rather forced, and we can hardly repress the feeling that the agreement which he finds is not one which was spontaneously recognized, but deliberately sought after and wrought out. Yes, we are even tempted to think that the stern hand of the law, which in his day still hovered over the domain of thought, and the shadow of which caused him for a season to abstain altogether from lecturing or writing on religious subjects, may have had something to do with the result.

Be this as it may, Kant agrees with the Christian doctrine in its acceptance of God and immortality; likewise in its insistence on good deeds as the outcome of a good will, and on a necessary regeneration of human nature. In other respects, however, the Christian doctrine is interpreted allegorically; while much that has from time immemorial been regarded as essential is merely tolerated as a useful accessory, if not cast overboard as an incumbrance. Morality is the essence of religion, and whatever tends to undermine this is condemned. Thus faith, in the sense of a belief in historical occurrences, and by means of which

salvation may be attained, is held to be of no importance.

"The reading of these holy writings, or the investigation of their contents, has the making of better human beings for its final purpose; the historical part, however, which contributes nothing thereto, is something that is absolutely indifferent by itself, which one may regard as one will." [1]

In fact, "everything which, beyond the good conduct of life, man believes he can do in order to become agreeable to God, is mere religious delusion and false worship." [2] For example, prayer "as an inner, formal act of worship, and thus considered as a means of grace, is a superstitious delusion"; baptism in itself is "no holy act, or act which produces holiness and receptivity for divine mercy"; [3] and the Lord's Supper likewise has no inherent purifying power. All historical faith, indeed, while valuable for the introduction of religious ideas, will finally be given up, and make way for the purely rational religion.

Personally Kant embodied all these views in his life. He was upright and conscientious above criticism. Duty was his pole-star. But he had no regard for mere outward observances; "for many years he never attended church, and observed no religious usages whatever." [4]

[1] Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft,* Leopold Voss, Leipzig, 1838, p. 132.

[2] *Ibid.,* p. 205.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 235 *et seq.*

[4] Stuckenberg, *Life of Immanuel Kant,* Macmillan and Company, London, 1882, p. 354.

The views of Kant regarding philosophy and religion were the starting point of the speculations of Fichte, that second great luminary of German idealism, who carried the teaching of the master to its logical conclusions, and bridged the way to Schelling and Hegel. Let us continue our series of expositions with a consideration of this brilliant thinker.

FICHTE

THAT Fichte was not a Christian in the strict and narrow acceptation of the term may be surmised from the fact that he was attacked, while professor at Jena, for his alleged atheism. Notwithstanding, he was religious in a deeper sense, and even insisted that his views agreed with the kernel of Christianity, especially with the gospel according to St. John. He went through two phases or periods of belief. By some these are regarded as distinct and separate, by others the second is considered as an outgrowth and continuation of the first. His earlier views are expressed in the essay entitled *Ueber den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung,*— the very essay, in fact, which brought forth the attacks referred to. Follow a few quotations:

"Our world is the embodied material of our duty. . . . This is the only possible confession of faith: cheerfully and unconstrainedly to do whatever duty commands, without doubt and calculation as to the results. . . . The faith just deduced is likewise the whole and complete faith. This living and active moral order is God himself; we need no other God, and can grasp no other." [1]

In his later period he passes beyond this position, and

[1] Fichte, *Sämmtliche Werke,* Veit und Comp. Berlin, 1845, Vol. V, pp. 185–6.

maintains that the "blessed life" (here on earth) is to be obtained, not merely through right doing, but through union with and love of "God." In this respect there is essential agreement, according to our philosopher, between his views and Christianity. It is wrong, however, to interpret Christianity in the narrow historic sense, and though Fichte refers to Christ in words that are most reverential, he would not have us regard him as the unique Son of God, through whom we are saved vicariously. "Only the Metaphysical, by no means the Historical, makes us blessed; the latter only makes us intelligent. If a person is united to God and has penetrated into him, it is wholly immaterial in which way he has arrived at this end; and it would be a very useless and perverse task perpetually to renew the memory of the way, instead of living in the thing itself." [1]

There is similarity between the blessedness of which Fichte speaks and Spinoza's intellectual love of God; likewise between the same and the state of affirmation described in Carlyle's "Everlasting Yea." These writers seem to have grasped a common idea, and this idea bears resemblance to the teachings both of Christianity and Buddhism. The question inevitably rises whether the basis in all these cases is not the same, and whether a profound law of our being is not here being touched, which has not as yet been fathomed, but of which great prophets and thinkers have occasionally gained a glimpse.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 485.

LESSING

THE three great classicists of German literature were Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe. A common feature of their religious attitude is their repudiation of Christianity in its narrower sense, but their affirmation of the broader and more general tenets of religion.

Lessing's religious views are to be studied in the controversial writings with Pastor Goeze, the essay entitled *The Education of the Human Race,* and the drama of tolerance, *Nathan the Wise.* The Goeze writings were called forth by Lessing's editing and publishing of the so-called *Wolfenbüttel Fragments,* written by his friend Reimarus, and foreshadowing the "higher criticism" of today. Goeze was an exponent of the rigid Lutheranism of eighteenth century Germany, and in expounding his views he drew forth from Lessing a statement of faith which, although familiar today, must have seemed destructive and even sacrilegious at the time. A selection from the "Axiomata" which form the chapter headings of one of his brilliant polemics, will bear out this statement:

"The Bible evidently contains more than belongs to religion. It is a mere hypothesis that the Bible is equally infallible in this "more." The letter is not the spirit, and the Bible is not synonymous with religion. Hence objections to the letter and the Bible are

not for that reason objections to the spirit and religion. Religion is not true because the evangelists and apostles taught it: but they taught it because it is true."

In the treatise on the *Education of the Human Race* Lessing develops the idea that revelation is a means of guiding humanity toward its higher destinies. "What education is for the individual, revelation is for the human race as a whole." A necessary corollary of this proposition is, that there is a conscious power which controls the destinies of mankind and which is the source of the revelation. This indicates that Lessing was not an atheist. But it is equally clear, from the detailed contents of the treatise, that his view of revelation is radically different from that of the orthodox believer. According to the latter, the primary aim of revelation is to guide humanity toward the attainment of salvation. According to Lessing, it is to improve life on the planet, and more specifically to bring about an era in which virtue shall be followed for its own sake, and not for the sake of mundane or transmundane rewards. Hence Lessing speaks of a third revelation, following that of the Old and New Testaments, through which the latter will be superseded.

The liberality of his views is attested most beautifully in his drama of brotherly love, *Nathan the Wise*. The three religions—Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity—are here compared, both by means of the characters in the play and the thoughts expressed, with the result that none is condemned and none exalted at the expense of the other two. All three are recognized as valuable, but love and humanity are rated still higher, as qualities which they are supposed to foster.

The parable of the rings embodies the central idea of the play. Its length precludes its reproduction here. It is one of the most beautiful lessons in forbearance and tolerance ever penned by the hand of man, and will amply repay a perusal on the part of those who have never read its inspired words.

SCHILLER

OF Schiller the same can be said as of Lessing: he was religious in a deeper sense, but emancipated from the narrow forms and observances of the church. Highly characteristic is the aphorism in which he expresses his faith:

Which religion do I profess? None of those
That you name.—Why none? Because of religion.

As a youth, to be sure, it was his intention to devote himself to a clerical career; but once having outgrown the narrow doctrines of Christianity as they were taught in his day, he never embraced them again. In a letter to Goethe he says:

"A healthy and beautiful nature—as you yourself say—requires no moral code, no law for its nature, no political metaphysics. You might as well have added that it requires no godhead, no idea of immortality wherewith to support and to maintain itself." [1]

Very significant, too, is a passage from a letter to Körner:

"Herder's sermon pleased me more that any that I have ever heard in my life—but I must candidly confess that in general no sermon pleases me. . . . A sermon is for the ordinary man—the man of thought

[1] *Correspondence between Goethe and Schiller,* George Bell and Sons, London, 1877, Vol. I, p. 199.

who champions it is a person of limited faculties, a dreamer, or a hypocrite." [1]

All this, however, must not blind us to the essentially ethical and religious nature of his writings,—in fact of his entire being. Duty, heroism, liberty, and brotherly love were the themes on which he never tired to dwell, and which he embodied in works that were truly religious in their fervor and exaltation. Religion, in fact, permeated his whole life. He dwelt in a higher realm than the ordinary: every day was for him a Sabbath, his vocation was a priestly office, and poetry as he conceived it a eulogy of the Eternal!

Nor did he deny the cardinal doctrines of religion, in their more general sense. He believed in God, as likewise in a continuation of life beyond the grave.

Carlyle speaks, in a passage which we shall later reproduce, of the things which a man practically has faith in, of his deep and vital relations to the mysterious Universe, which he lays to heart, and does not merely assent to in verbal confessions. This, he says, is the important thing for the man, and constitutes his religion or no-religion. In the light of this statement, let us consider the following words from one of Schiller's well-known prose writings:

"Think, O Raphael, of a truth that benefits the whole human race to remote ages; add that this truth condemns its confessor to death—that this truth can only be proved and believed if he dies. Conceive this man, gifted with the clear all-embracing and illuminating eye of genius, with the flaming torch of enthusiasm,

[1] *Schiller's Briefwechsel mit Körner,* Veit und Comp. Leipzig, 1878, Vol. I, p. 86.

with all the sublime adaptations for love: let the grand ideal of this great effect be presented to his soul; let him have only an obscure anticipation of all the happy beings he will make; let the present and future crowd at the same time into his soul; and then answer me,—does this man require to be referred to a future life?" [1]

Would it be possible to have a nobler "practical belief" than this, or vital relations to the "mysterious Universe" more exalted? And does the fact that this attitude does not rest on specific religious considerations detract from its value? Truly, the person who can feel and speak like this must be included among the most devout of human beings, among those who are essentially and thoroughly religious.

[1] Schiller, *Essays: Æsthetical and Philosophical,* George Bell and Sons, London, 1884, p. 338.

GOETHE

GOETHE lived to the ripe age of eighty-three years. Hence he went through many changes of feeling and belief which a younger man might not have experienced. The same was true of his religious views. He never was a Christian in the narrow sense, still less the adherent of a special sect. But as the years rolled on the antagonism which he had at times felt and expressed toward the religion of the Nazarene was softened, and gave way to a spirit of conciliation.

On the whole, we may say that Goethe's views coincided with those of Lessing and Schiller. Though not an orthodox believer, he was religious in a deeper sense, and repeatedly affirmed his belief in a deity and immortality.

What he disliked about creeds was their narrowness, their insistence on special possession of truth. In his eyes, all forms of religion had value, but none was the sole depository of truth. Indeed, the Godhead revealed itself in aspects of life that lay entirely outside of the church,—in nature, art, science, philosophy, and history.

His attitude is indicated in the following aphorism:

Whoever art and science has,
Religion calls his own;

But who these two does not possess,
Let him religion own.

Highly *à propos* is the scene in Faust where Margaret questions her lover concerning his beliefs. Though it is generally difficult to determine to what extent an author's characters express his own convictions, yet it is likely, from all that we know of Goethe, that the words of Faust represent the poet's personal views.

MARGARET

How is't with thy religion, pray?
Thou art a dear, good-hearted man,
And yet, I think, dost not incline that way.

FAUST

Leave that, my child! Thou know'st my love is tender;
For love, my blood and life would I surrender,
And as for Faith and Church, I grant to each his own.

MARGARET

That's not enough: we must believe thereon.

FAUST

Must we?

MARGARET

Would that I had some influence!
Then, too, thou honorest not the Holy Sacraments.

FAUST

I honor them.

MARGARET

Desiring no possession.
'Tis long since thou hast been to mass or to confession.
Believest thou in God?

FAUST

My darling, who shall dare
"I believe in God!" to say?
Ask priest or sage the answer to declare,
And it will seem a mocking play,
A sarcasm on the asker.

MARGARET

Then thou believest not!

FAUST

Hear me not falsely, sweetest countenance!
Who dare express Him?
And who profess Him,
Saying: I believe in Him!
Who, feeling, seeing,
Deny His being,
Saying: I believe Him not!
The All-enfolding,
The All-upholding,
Folds and upholds he not
Thee, me, Himself?
Arches not there the sky above us?

Lies not beneath us, firm, the earth?
And rise not, on us shining,
Friendly, the everlasting stars?
Look I not, eye to eye, on thee,
And feel'st not, thronging
To head and heart, the force,
Still weaving its eternal secret,
Invisible, visible, round thy life?
Vast as it is, fill with that force thy heart,
And when thou in the feeling wholly blessed art,
Call it, then, what thou wilt,—
Call it Bliss! Heart! Love! God!
I have no name to give it!
Feeling is all in all:
The Name is sound and smoke,
Obscuring Heaven's clear glow.[1]

Faust, the greatest work of Goethe, makes liberal use of Christian material, and ends with the salvation of the hero. The work, however, is largely of a symbolical nature, whence it would be rash to draw any conclusions from it regarding the author's religious views. Mythological characters, for example, are introduced in the work without a thought as to their reality; and it surely did not occur to Goethe to depict a really existent personage in the character of Mephistopheles. But even if we are disposed to view the general course of the drama as an indication

[1] Goethe, *Faust*, translated by Bayard Taylor, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, p. 156 *et seq.* The selections from works published by Houghton Mifflin Company are reprinted by permission of and special arrangement with Houghton Mifflin Company.

of the poet's creed, we are not justified in discovering in it any close adherence to the Christian doctrine; for if Faust survives death and is saved, this is not because of any religious belief which he may have entertained, but because he never ceased working and striving.

The noble Spirit now is free,
And saved from evil scheming:
Whoe'er aspires unweariedly
Is not beyond redeeming.[1]

Goethe, too, illustrates what we meet with so often among our great thinkers: he was religious according to the spirit, but not the letter. He believed in the great underlying truths of religion, but rejected the narrow pretensions of dogma and creed.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 308.

THE RELIGION OF THIRTY GREAT THINKERS

NINETEENTH CENTURY

CARLYLE

CARLYLE'S was a devoutly spiritual nature. Religion was to him what air is to the organism,—the thing we live by, the vital element of our being.

But his religion was not of the definitely formulated type that was current in Christian domains. What he meant by this term is well expressed in the following words, already referred to on a previous page:

"By religion I do not mean here the church-creed which he (a man) professes, the articles of faith which he will sign and, in words or otherwise, assert; not this wholly, in many cases not this at all. We see men of all kinds of professed creeds attain to almost all degrees of worth or worthlessness under each or any of them. This is not what I call religion, this profession and assertion; which is often only a profession and assertion from the outworks of the man, from the mere argumentative region of him, if even so deep as that. But the thing a man does practically believe (and this is often enough *without* asserting it even to himself, much less to others); the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively de-

termines all the rest. That is his *religion;* or, it may be, his mere scepticism and *no-religion.*" [1]

In this sense, as we have said, Carlyle was deeply religious. He had no patience with the philosophy which regards the universe as a mere mechanism, without wonder and spiritual depth. In general, he was out of sympathy with the view of the world which had been promulgated by the French illumination, but inclined toward the deep philosophical visions of the German idealists. He was mystical by nature, rather than rationalistic.

"System of Nature! To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite *infinite* depth, of quite infinite expansion; and all Experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square-miles. The course of Nature's phases, on this our little fraction of a Planet, is partially known to us: but who knows what deeper courses these depend on; what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny and pebble, and quality and accident, of its little native Creek may have become familiar: but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic Currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon's Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little Creek is regulated, and may, from time to time, (*un*-miraculously enough), be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons

[1] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero Worship,* Donohue, Henneberry & Co., Chicago, p. 7.

and periodic Currents the mysterious Course of Providence through Aeons of Aeons." [1]

As regards Christianity, while he does not adhere to the view that truth and salvation are bound up with a particular religion, yet he accords to this creed a place quite apart from other confessions, a place more noble and exalted. Christianity cannot be compared with the systems of Greek philosophy. It belongs in a class by itself, and transcends these as a beautiful poem transcends a correct mathematical demonstration. Those who class it with the Greek systems have not experienced the most elevated feeling of which the human heart is susceptible.[2]

In the three chapters of *Sartor Resartus* entitled The Everlasting No, The Centre of Indifference, and The Everlasting Yea—which are doubtless based on personal experience—Carlyle depicts a development of the soul which is remarkably akin to religious conversion. The process is one which has been traced, though with certain variations, by many other writers, —by Tolstoi, for example, in his *Confession*, where it assumes a genuinely religious form, and by Schopenhauer, in the chapters of his *World as Will and Idea* which treat of the denial of the will. This repeated depiction of the same process on the part of great writers indicates that it is a normal growth of human nature, not a mere freak or illusion. But the fact that it assumes many different forms, some of them

[1] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, A. C. McClurg and Company, Chicago, 1893, p. 255.

[2] See Carlyle's *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, The American Bookmart, Chicago, p. 450.

not even religious in character, would seem to prove that it is not a specifically religious process, connected with a special confession of faith, but, like the developments of puberty, universal in character, and inherent in the nature of the heart and mind.

JOHN STUART MILL

CONTRARY to what is true of many great writers, the religious views of John Stuart Mill are not subject to any doubt: he has expressed them with characteristic clearness in three essays: *Nature, The Utility of Religion,* and *Theism.* Most important for the subject in hand is the last; and in tracing Mr. Mill's views, we need do little but select quotations from this remarkably lucid treatise.

His general conclusion is that "the rational attitude of a thinking mind towards the supernatural, whether in natural or in revealed religion, is that of skepticism as distinguished from belief on the one hand, and from atheism on the other." [1]

He recognizes four arguments for theism: the teleological, cosmological and ontological,—besides the argument which is based on the common approval of mankind. The last three are rejected as insufficient to compel assent; but "the adaptations in Nature afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence." [2]

It is worthy to note, however, that this essay was written but a few years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species,*—when the conclusions of this thinker had not yet found widespread acceptance. In

[1] Mill, *Three Essays on Religion,* Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1878, p. 242.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 174.

regard to its bearing on religion, Mill admits that though "the theory if admitted would be in no way whatever inconsistent with Creation . . . it must be acknowledged that it would greatly attenuate the evidence for it." [1]

Considering that Mr. Mill qualifies his indorsement of the argument from design with the words "in the present state of our knowledge," it is reasonable to suppose that thorough acceptance of the evolutionary doctrine would have resulted in a considerable weakening, if not entire collapse, of his belief in a deity, as based on the argument in question.

In regard to the attributes of the Being who is thus indicated by natural theology, Mill concludes that he is a "Being of great but limited power, how or by what limited we cannot even conjecture; of great, and perhaps unlimited intelligence, but perhaps, also, more narrowly limited than his power: who desires, and pays some regard to, the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for, and who can hardly be supposed to have created the universe for that purpose alone." [2] Evidently a conclusion widely at variance with the views of traditional religion, according to which omnipotence and omniscience, especially, have almost invariably been regarded as necessary attributes.

When he comes to the question of immortality, Mr. Mill finds but little to comfort the soul with eager expectations.

"There is," he tell us, "no assurance whatever of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 174.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

a life after death, on grounds of natural religion." [1]

Nor does he consider this a great misfortune. For in the concluding words of his essay on the *Utility of Religion,* he informs us that "it seems to me not only possible but probable, that in a higher, and, above all, a happier condition of human life, not annihilation but immortality may be the burdensome idea; and that human nature, though pleased with the present, and by no means impatient to quit it, would find comfort and not sadness in the thought that it is not chained through eternity to a conscious existence which it cannot be assured that it will always wish to preserve." [2]

As to the nature of the after-life, in case there is one, Mr. Mill is satisfied that it will be a natural development from the present existence, not involving a "sudden break in our spiritual life."

"To imagine that a miracle will be wrought at death by the act of God making perfect every one whom it is his will to include among his elect, might be justified by an express revelation duly authenticated, but is utterly opposed to every presumption that can be deduced from the light of Nature." [3]

There remains a consideration of this question of revelation. Mill distinguishes between internal and external evidences for the same. The former is concerned with the subject-matter of the revelation, which is supposed to be so excellent that none but a supernatural origin can be postulated for it. It is dismissed by Mill as inadequate. The external evidence is nar-

[1] *Ibid.,* p. 210.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 122.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 211.

rowed down to the testimony regarding supernatural facts, or miracles. After a lengthy review of the arguments pro and con, Mill comes to the conclusion "that miracles have no claim whatever to the character of historical facts and are wholly invalid as evidences of any revelation." [1]

It is clear, then, that Mr. Mill is not in any rigid sense a believer. He rejects revelation, he finds no reasons for immortality, and his only argument for God is based on the marks of design in nature, which we have reason to believe would have collapsed upon a thorough acceptance of the evolutionary doctrine. Evidently, therefore, a very slender thread upon which to hang a belief in higher things. Though he calls his position that of a skeptic, there is little to distinguish it, if we abstract from the teleological argument, from what is ordinarily designated as atheism. To be sure, he expressly states that it is possible for Hope to go beyond these definite conclusions, and earnestly defends its exercise; but the question involuntarily arises: how is it possible for Hope to thrive when there is so little to serve as a foundation?

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 239.

SPENCER

NOT radically different in his teachings from Mill, was the latter's countryman, Herbert Spencer. Spencer lived at the time of Darwin, and was the philosophical exponent of the theory of evolution. He embodied his views in an extended series of works known as the Synthetic Philosophy. So far as religious belief is concerned, Spencer is known as the mouthpiece of Agnosticism. He believed that the ultimate nature of reality was unknowable, and devoted his energies to the elucidation of those "knowable" phenomena which fall within the range of our faculties.

A position like this excludes all dogmatizing concerning the things which usually fill the pages of theologians. In general, Spencer was antagonistic to the teachings of current Christianity, and his hostility was cordially returned on the part of the clergy. The following passage, from our philosopher's *Autobiography,* in which he speaks of the boyhood days when dissent had not as yet become clearly formulated, shows his mature attitude toward the doctrines of Christianity.

"Criticism had not yet shown me how astonishing is the supposition that the Cause from which have arisen thirty millions of Suns with their attendant planets, took the form of a man, and made a bargain

with Abraham to give him territory in return for allegiance. I had not at that time repudiated the notion of a deity who is pleased with the singing of his praises, and angry with the infinitesimal beings he has made when they fail to tell him perpetually of his greatness. It had not become manifest to me how absolutely and immeasurably unjust it would be that for Adam's disobedience (which might have caused a harsh man to discharge his servant), all Adam's guiltless descendants should be damned, with the exception of a relatively few who accepted the "plan of salvation," which the immense majority never heard of. Nor had I in those days perceived the astounding nature of the creed which offers for profoundest worship, a being who calmly looks on while myriads of his creatures are suffering eternal torments." [1]

Men often change their radical opinions as they grow older, and adopt more conciliatory views. We had an example in Goethe, and the same was true of Spencer. Although remaining a dissenter to the end, in regard to the substance of the established religion, he nevertheless recognized a certain disciplinary value in religious beliefs. Likewise he appreciated that they fill a place in life which "can never become an unfilled sphere"; and answer questions—albeit faultily—concerning our deepest interests, which persist in calling for a solution. "Thus religious creeds," he concludes, "which in one way or other occupy the sphere that rational interpretation seeks to occupy and fails, and fails the more the more it seeks, I have come to

[1] Spencer, *An Autobiography*, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1904, Vol. I, p. 171.

regard with a sympathy based on community of need: feeling that dissent from them results from inability to accept the solutions offered, joined with the wish that solutions could be found." [1]

This passage is interesting from two points of view. In the first place, it shows how age has a conciliatory effect on our attitude toward the world, as mentioned. And it proves how deep and ingrained in human nature is the religious need. Spencer, of all men, was one of the least prone to give way to promptings of feeling. There was nothing sentimental about him. He was a skeptic by nature, and his mind was of the brilliantly intellectual and coldly objective type. All his life had been spent in the defense of theories which were opposed to the religious convictions of the time, and frequent clashes with the spokesmen of religion must have fortified him in his opposition. Yet here he is, on the threshold of the grave, speaking with sympathy of the views he has throughout a lifetime opposed, and all but joining hands with his adversaries. It proves that religion is a need of the human heart, which no amount of theoretical insight will ever succeed in banishing.

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 549.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE problem of Matthew Arnold was comparatively narrow. But within his self-imposed limits, the deductions which he drew were singularly clear and forcible.

The problem was, to separate the true from the false in the Christian religion, and thus to save the former from contamination by the latter.

To use his own words, "two things about the Christian religion must surely be clear to anybody with eyes in his head. One is, that men cannot do without it; the other, that they cannot do with it as it is." [1]

Arnold's position was that of the higher critic of the Bible. He realized that the popular conception of Holy Writ, based on a literal interpretation of its contents, was radically wrong; that miracles, prophecies and the like could no longer be accepted; yes, that the doctrines of the trinity and the divinity of Jesus, likewise, were mythological in nature, and would sooner or later have to go; and in order to rescue what was good, he threw the less good overboard, and thus forestalled the complete repudiation of religion on the part of those who could not stomach its indigestible elements.

A few quotations will make his position clearer.

[1] Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1913, p. XI. The selections from Matthew Arnold in this chapter are reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

We shall begin with those which exhibit his heterodox opinions.

"The Bible is not a talisman, to be taken and used literally.[1] . . . Our three creeds, and with them the whole of our so-called orthodox theology, are founded upon words which Jesus in all probability never uttered.[2] . . . So deeply unsound is the mass of traditions and imaginations of which popular religion consists, so gross a distortion and caricature of the true religion does it present, that future times will hardly comprehend its audacity in calling those who abjure it atheists.[3] . . . The mental habit of him who imagines that Balaam's ass spoke, in no respect differs from the mental habit of him who imagines that a Madonna of wood or stone winked.[4] . . . Even with Lourdes and La Salette before our eyes, we may yet say that miracles are doomed; they will drop out, like fairies or witchcraft, from among the matters which serious people believe." [5]

In regard to the value of real Christianity and religion, however, Arnold has not a moment's doubt.

"For us, religion is the solidest of realities, and Christianity the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection.[6] . . . To the Bible men will return; and why? Because they cannot do without it. Because happiness is our being's end and aim,

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma,* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1899, p. XXVII.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 255.
[3] *God and the Bible,* p. 2.
[4] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy,* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1895, p. 123.
[5] *Literature and Dogma,* p. 226.
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 98.

and happiness belongs to righteousness, and righteousness is revealed in the Bible." [1]

The essence of the Bible he finds in the Old Testament doctrine that righteousness is salvation, and in the method and secret of Jesus,—the method referring to the idea that conscience is the criterion of conduct, and the secret to the blessedness of self-renouncement. In these he finds the gist of religion. As for God, he substitutes the conception of "the Eternal Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." Anything beyond this, he maintains, is not susceptible of verification.

To retain these precious elements, we must strip them of all accessories which are repugnant to reason.

"There will be an interval, between the time when men take the religion of the Bible to be a thaumaturgy and the time when they perceive it to be something different, in which they will be prone to throw aside the religion of the Bible altogether as a delusion. And this, again, will be mainly the fault,—if fault that can be called which was an inevitable error,—of the religious people themselves, who, from the time of the Apostles downwards, have insisted upon it that religion shall be a thaumaturgy or nothing.[2] . . . (Many persons) have made up their minds that what is popularly called *miracle* never really happens nor can happen, and that the belief in it arises out of either ignorance or mistake. To these persons we restore the use of the Bible, if, while showing them that the Bible-language is not scientific, but the language of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 308.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

common speech or of poetry and eloquence . . . we convince them at the same time that this language deals with facts of positive experience, most momentous and real." [1]

Thus Matthew Arnold rejects the claims, on the one hand, of those who uphold orthodox Christianity, with its fantastic and irrational elements; but he is equally zealous in refuting those who would do away with all religion whatsoever. He defends Christianity as a peculiarly happy combination of the valuable elements of religion, placing it above Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism in this respect. He likens it to Greek art, which must be studied by every one who would obtain artistic mastery; similarly all who would reach the highest levels of conduct must turn to the communications of the Bible. His position is much like that of Tolstoi; and in general he represents the line of thought which has been gaining wide prominence of late, and which is being followed more and more within the confines of the church itself.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 114

BROWNING

CONCERNING Browning's general stand on religion there is little doubt, concerning his detailed beliefs a great deal.

To begin with, Browning was a fervent believer in God and immortality. His works are permeated with these ideas, and numerous beautiful passages give evidence of them; of which the following, from *Abt Vogler,* is often quoted:

"There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round." [1]

His position on these cardinal points thus being clear, it behoves us to inquire what was his stand concerning the particular dogmas of the church. Here the answer is not so sure. One biographer endeavors to prove that Browning was a follower of the Nazarene; another refers to "those who, like himself,

[1] Browning, *Complete Poetic and Dramatic Works,* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, p. 383.

rejected or questioned the dogmatic teachings of Christianity." [1]

We do not know the particular facts on which this declaration is based. Perhaps one was a statement of Robert Buchanan, in the *Letter Dedicatory* of his *Outcast,* where he tells of a conversation in which Browning emphatically denied his Christianity. On the other hand we have the testimony of Alfred Domett, Browning's intimate friend, which seems to affirm exactly the opposite. Domett had evinced surprise, on a particular occasion, that Browning should have attacked an opinion of Byron's, whereupon Browning answered that he did so "as a Christian." [2] Domett adds, however, that this was the only occasion on which he had ever heard the poet clearly proclaim his Christianity.

To our mind this statement of Domett's, which is introduced as a substantiation of the poet's belief, can hardly be regarded in this light. The thing that impresses us is not, that the avowal was made, but that it was the only avowal of the kind ever made to so intimate a friend. A firm believer, one would think, would have given evidence of his belief on more than one occasion.

In general, the arguments of the biographers in question do not sound convincing. We are told that Browning was raised in the Christian faith; that he never showed himself hostile to the same; that he con-

[1] Mrs. Sutherland Orr, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning,* Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston and New York, 1891, Vol. II, p. 540.

[2] Griffin and Minchin, *The Life of Robert Browning,* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1912, p. 249.

stantly used Biblical subjects in his poems; that he referred to Christ, on a certain occasion, as a "Divine Being"; and that he often went to church when away from London, though not a regular attendant at home.[1]

The fact that Browning was raised as a Christian counts for nothing, the same being true of many pronounced freethinkers as well. And the fact that he manifested no hostility toward the church has merely negative significance. Hardly more convincing is the circumstance that he frequently made use of Biblical subjects. As plausible would it be to assume that Schiller believed in pagan mythology, because he drew so liberally from classic sources. As for the allusion to Christ, it is well to remember that Browning likewise referred to his mother, on a particular occasion, as a "divine woman."[2] Are we to infer from this that he really believed in the divinity of his mother? Finally it seems much more significant that he did not attend church in London than that he should occasionally have done so on his travels.

While we are uncertain, then, as to the degree of correspondence between Browning's religion and the Christian faith, we are reasonably sure that there were some articles of that faith, as commonly received, which he did not share. He accepted the doctrine of evolution at a time when this was still rare among orthodox believers, which would seem to involve a rejection of the literal account of creation. And there is no doubt that he did not subscribe to the belief in eternal damnation. This is in harmony with the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 296.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

general tenor of his poetry, and is definitely proved by the following stanza from the poem entitled *Apparent Failure:*

My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.[1]

Taken in conjunction with his lack of church attendance in London, all this seems to prove that Browning was not orthodox in the strictest accepted sense. On the other hand, he seems certainly to have been a Christian in the broader, more general sense. And this may account for the apparent discrepancy of the evidence. "Christian" means various things; and one may be a follower of Christ in one acceptation of the word, but not in another. The statement of Domett's indicates that Browning was not very communicative as to these aspects of his soul-life. And so it may well be that we shall never know his exact theological position. He undoubtedly believed in God and immortality; he was in thorough sympathy with the Christian religion; and he could probably be called an adherent of that religion in the broader sense of the word. But it is doubtful whether he was so in any narrower sense, and he certainly rejected some doctrines which are usually proclaimed

[1] Browning, *Complete Poetic and Dramatic Works,* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, p. 413.

by orthodox believers. Probably, then, we shall not deviate widely from the truth if we sum up the evidence with the statement that Browning was a liberal, undogmatic Christian.

COMTE

COMTE has been classed as an atheist. Better might it be to substitute the term agnostic. For the cornerstone of his philosophy is the idea that we know nothing concerning the final consitution of the universe, but are confined to those sequences of cause and effect which have appropriately been designated as "phenomena," in contradistinction to "noumena." His standpoint is accordingly allied to that of Hume, Mill, and Spencer.

The starting point of his system is to be found in the law that human knowledge passes through three different stages, known as the theological or fictitious, the metaphysical or abstract, and the scientific or positive.

In the first or theological state, things are explained through a direct reference to superhuman beings. They are caused by a God or gods, and further explanation is deemed unnecessary.

The second or metaphysical state is not much different from the first. Instead of gods, we now have mythical entities which are supposed to be the cause of things. Thus life would in this stage be accounted for as the result of a "vital force."

"In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after Absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of

phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws—that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance." [1]

The principle thus educed is followed through the various sciences, of which Comte has given us a new classification. Mathematics, astronomy, and physics are the first to have arrived at the positive stage, chemistry and biology have attained their maturity but recently, while sociology is still struggling toward its desideratum.

It is not in our province to follow the development of these views, as we are only interested in the opinions which can more particularly be designated as religious. But here, too, Comte has struck an entirely new note. To take the place of traditional worship, which is doomed to extinction, our author has substituted the worship of humanity. The religion, therefore, which he proposes, is known as the Religion of Humanity. There is no God in this religion. Instead we have Man himself, as the supreme object of worship. The forms and ceremonies of the cult are borrowed in great measure from the current creeds. There are priests and temples; likewise there are sacraments, corresponding to the important turning points and periods of life. Public festivals are provided for. Great men are to be revered, and there is to be a family worship of deceased parents by their children, and reciprocally of husbands and wives, brothers and sisters. But there is no immortality, beyond the traces which our lives may leave in the memory of posterity.

[1] Comte, *The Positive Philosophy,* William Gowans, New York, 1868, p. 26.

The philosophy thus briefly sketched was closely related to the thoughts and tendencies of the age,—as indeed is the case with all vital systems of thought. It mirrored the growing interest in exact science, as opposed to the deductive reasonings of former ages. And it reflected the increasing solicitude for human welfare, as it found expression likewise in freer forms of government and systematic plans for the amelioration of social conditions. Only its specific forms and ceremonies have turned out to be an anachronism. Borrowed from the older creeds, and out of harmony with the spirit of the age, they have merely proved to be an amiable dream, and have never found adoption on a wider scale.

RENAN

RENAN was one of the most interesting literary figures of the nineteenth century. His style, personality, and the story of his reversal of faith,—all combined to make him such. Destined for the priesthood and on the threshold of taking holy orders, he was beset with doubts as to the truths of Christianity, until finally his faith was undermined and he renounced his intended vocation. The account of his inner revolution is given in the delightful "Recollections of My Youth," from which we subjoin a passage.

"In a divine book everything must be true, and as two contradictions cannot both be true, it must not contain any contradiction. But the careful study of the Bible which I had undertaken, while revealing to me many historical and esthetic treasures, proved to me also that it was not more exempt than any other ancient book from contradictions, inadvertencies, and errors. It contains fables, legends, and other traces of purely human composition. It is no longer possible for any one to assert that the second part of the book of Isaiah was written by Isaiah. The book of Daniel, which, according to all orthodox tenets, relates to the period of the captivity, is an apocryphal work composed in the year 169 or 170 B. C. The book of Judith is an historical impossibility. The attribution of the

Pentateuch to Moses does not bear investigation, and to deny that several parts of Genesis are mystical in their meaning is equivalent to admitting as actual realities descriptions such as that of the Garden of Eden, the apple, and Noah's Ark." [1]

It is interesting to compare the grounds which lead various thinkers to reject the authority of the Bible. Although many reasons are held in common, yet certain thinkers will preferentially pick out special aspects of the problem, and dwell on these. Thus Rousseau, as we have seen, bases his objection to revealed religions on the difficulty of pronouncing on the authenticity and accuracy of the documents underlying them, and the resulting injustice of holding us accountable for our verdicts. Voltaire dwells on the general absurdity and immorality of the contents of Holy Writ. Matthew Arnold's difficulty arises from the faulty interpretation of Christianity which has been held from time immemorial. While Nietzsche, as we shall see, objects especially to the ethical system taught by Christianity. Renan's point of emphasis seems to be the fact that a Divine book must contain no errors, while the Scriptures are full of them. It is singular that so little should have been made of this difficulty by the writers previously considered, for it is assuredly a point of vital importance. Our author recurs to it again and again. "The mildest Catholic doctrine as to inspiration will not allow one to admit that there is any marked error in the sacred text. . . . To abandon a single dogma or reject a single tenet in

[1] Renan, *Recollections of My Youth,* New York, 1883, p. 246. Quoted with the permission of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

the teaching of the Church, is equivalent to the negation of the Church and of Revelation." [1] He seems to make it the cornerstone of his apostasy.

In regard to his position after he had broken with the faith of the fathers, it was decidedly skeptical, and one might not have gone far astray if one had called him, in ordinary parlance, an atheist. Nevertheless, he believed in the possibility of a further order of things in which the hand of God was evident, and expressed the hope of a continuance of life beyond the grave. "The two fundamental dogmas of religion, God and immortality, remain rationally undemonstrable; but one cannot say that they are smitten with absolute impossibility." [2] Immortality, he thought, was not as likely as the existence of God, but might nevertheless turn out to be a fact.

In this rather lukewarm defense of the realities of religion, Renan reminds us of John Stuart Mill. With Mill, too, there is little in the way of positive proof, and certitude in regard to divine matters gives way to mere hope.

Having completed our study of Renan, we again pass from French to German domains, and take up the series of philosophers which was broken off with Fichte.

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 247 and 252.

[2] Renan, *Recollections and Letters*, New York, Cassell Publishing Company, p. 307.

SCHELLING

SCHELLING is the second of the great trio of German philosophers who succeeded Kant, and who developed the ideas promulgated by this thinker into the systems known as Idealism.

There is considerable difference between the religious views of Schelling's youth and those of his later days. As a young man our philosopher's attitude toward the accepted creeds was antagonistic. It is characterized by the following lines from a semi-humorous poem entitled: "Epikurisch Glaubensbekenntniss Heinz Widerporstens" (*Epicurean Confession of Faith of Heinz Widerporsten*).

"Therefore religion I forsake,
All superstitious ties I break,
No church will I visit to hear them preach,
I have done with all that the parsons teach." [1]

Philosophically his views may be designated as Idealistic Pantheism, the influence of Spinoza being clearly evident. As he says further on in the same poem:

[1] Quoted from Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston and New York, 1892, p. 187.

"Therefore is that religion true,
E'en though to light it pushes through
Midst stones and moss that clings,
Midst flowers, metals and all things;
Which writes its secret hieroglyphs
In caves and on the highest cliffs."

His attitude toward Christian doctrines, as expressed in the *Lectures on the Method of Academical Study,* is summarized by Schwegler as follows:

"The incarnation of God is an incarnation from eternity. The eternal Son of God, born from the essence of the father of all things, is the finite itself, as it is in the eternal intuition of God. Christ is only the historical and phenomenal pinnacle of the incarnation; as an individual, he is a person wholly intelligible from the circumstances of the age in which he appeared. Since God is eternally outside of all time, it is inconceivable that he should have assumed a human nature at any definite moment of time. The temporal form of Christianity, the exoteric Christianity does not correspond to its idea, and its perfection is yet to come. A chief hindrance to the perfection of Christianity was, and is, the so-called Bible, which, moreover, is far inferior to other religious writings, in a genuine religious content. The future must bring a new birth of esoteric Christianity, or a new and higher form of religion, in which philosophy, religion, and poesy shall melt together in unity." [1]

[1] Schwegler, *A History of Philosophy,* D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1894, p. 376.

In later years, as mentioned, Schelling's views underwent a change. His pantheism gave way to the belief in a personal God, between whom and the world there is a certain opposition. The latter has fallen away from its source, and history represents the reconciliation. Christianity is the central point of history, Christ is the Son of God, and his sacrifice an act of mediation. This position, however, must not be considered as perfectly identical with orthodoxy. Frantz, the careful exponent of Schelling's later philosophy, although emphasizing the agreement between Schelling's views and Christianity, repeatedly speaks of the divergence between the teachings of the master and the orthodox position. The fall of man, for example, is not to be conceived as a historical happening, but as an act which is "above history"; an act, furthermore, which does not consist in eating an apple, but in the fact of man's becoming an individual for himself. His very existence, in fact, is the sin for which Christ must atone.[1] A view of the matter, evidently, which is far removed from the version we are accustomed to hearing from orthodox lips. But with all this divergence, Schelling's theories must be admitted to be a close approach to the usual doctrines.

Ordinarily a man's later views are considered riper and more reliable than his earlier, and are accepted as his confession of faith. But the case of Schelling is unique. A youth of great precocity, he began producing works of world-stirring power before he had

[1] See Frantz, *Schelling's positive Philosophie usw.*, Cöthen, 1879–1886.

reached the age of twenty-five. One brilliant treatise followed the other in rapid succession, and in a short span of time he had won a place by the side of the greatest thinkers of history. Then suddenly, at the age of thirty-four, he ceases writing, and although he lives to the ripe age of seventy-nine, hardly a word appears from his pen to the day of his death. The works containing the *"Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation,"* which contain his later views, were published posthumously. His fame as a philosopher, his influence on contemporary thought,—in short, all that compels us to include him in the list of great thinkers, is based entirely on those early works. His name would endure without the least diminution of lustre even though his latest writings were lost and forgotten. The reverse, however, could not be asserted. *The Philosophy of Mythology and Revelation* by itself, without the brilliant effusions of his youth, would hardly suffice to earn him a place even among the thinkers of second rank. So it would seem as if especial stress ought to be laid on the early views, in determining Schelling's religious stand. At least, it is hardly feasible to accept the later opinions as a sole and sufficient account of his attitude. For whereas these later speculations may be regarded as the embodiment of his mature thought, they fail to give expression to his vigorous and vital periods of activity. But whereas the earlier views were produced while Schelling was still at the zenith of his power, they were superseded by later pronouncements from the same pen. The situation is peculiar, and we hesitate to make a decision. Perhaps the best plan, there-

fore, will be to leave the matter just as it is, stating the views of both periods, and giving equal prominence to each; or allowing the reader himself to choose that one of the two which he thinks more representative of the man in his totality.

HEGEL

AFTER Schelling comes Hegel. His religious views are intimately connected with his philosophy,—so intimately, in fact, that some statement of the philosophy must be made in presenting his views. According to Hegel, the universe is to be conceived as a process. This comes to view everywhere,—in mind and nature, in history, art, and religion. Three steps constitute the process, which are repeated again and again. A thing or idea is first posited, then it is negated or contradicted in its opposite, and finally both are taken up and reconciled in a third, which includes them. The process is first worked out in the realm of pure being (without objective or subjective reality, as we should say), or Logic. By a rigid application of the method, the so-called categories which rule our thinking and existence are deduced. Being, non-being, becoming, quality, quantity, measure, subjectivity, objectivity, absoluteness,—to mention but these,—are generated from each other with inexorable regularity. But the categories are no empty moulds, in which we ensnare the objective world; on the contrary, they are the very stuff of which the world and life are composed, and the formula by which they are produced is also active in the realms of "reality."

The rhythm of progression is evident again when

we come to the objective world. First we have pure Being, as it exists in the realm of the categories; this negates itself by passing over into nature; but in the life of spirit it returns again, and Being is realized in a higher synthesis. We have subjective, objective, and absolute spirit. The former deals with the individual, the second has the state and history for its subject-matter, and the third represents the return of spirit to itself in art, religion, and philosophy, where it regains perfect freedom. Art is "the anticipated triumph of mind over matter . . . the idea penetrating matter and transforming it after its image." [1] In religion man pictures the Infinite under the form of "representation." Three stages are recognized. In the religions of the Orient, the infinite aspect of the Deity is emphasized, and man is nothing. In the mythology of the Greeks, the finite comes into its rights, even the Gods being little more than human. The opposition between the two is resolved in Christianity, which is the absolute religion. Here the human and the infinite are reconciled in Christ, the God-man. But religion is not the highest manifestation of the absolute spirit. This place of honor is reserved for philosophy, which gives us a true picture of the whole process in concepts, and thus forms its consummation.

It is difficult to do justice, in a few words, to a system so novel and complicated as this, and no doubt but few of our readers who have not previously been familiar with the system will do more than gather the faintest idea of it. But it will be apparent, we imagine, that so far as religion is concerned, the system does

[1] Weber, *History of Philosophy*, Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 524.

not coincide closely with the ideas that are usually held concerning that subject,—especially with those that are embodied in Christianity. There is a Being who may be designated as God, to be sure, but this Being is merely the process itself, in its totality, and we are parts of it. Furthermore, Christianity, while it is designated as the highest or absolute religion, is not the only true confession of faith, but is one of many creeds which also contain aspects of the truth. Finally, religion as a whole is not the highest statement of reality, but is transcended by philosophy, which gives us the truth in its most perfect, undisguised form. To be sure, Hegel himself professed to see a close agreement between his philosophy and Christianity, but his verdict has not been generally accepted by posterity. Indeed, shortly after his death, already, a considerable party arose within the ranks of his followers, known as the Hegelian "left," which, in opposition to the "right," emphasized the radical difference between the world-view of the master and that of the orthodox believers. Feuerbach was one of these, and he carried his views as far as atheism and materialism.

But whatever the exact position of the master, the truth which he finds in Christianity certainly is not of the literal character, but partakes more or less of the symbolical. This is evident in his view of the fall of man. There was no single individual called Adam, who fell once and for all, and the results of whose fall we inherit. On the contrary, Adam is to be conceived as Man in general, before the development of the consciousness which enables him to distinguish good and evil. And while this development may be considered

as a misfortune from one point of view, it is necessary for the unfolding of his higher nature, or redemption. Somewhat similar, we remember, was the view of the fall propounded by Schelling. And in Schopenhauer, again, we shall meet with an analogous conception, coupled with a symbolical view of the atonement which is effected by Christ. These philosophers represent one of those peculiar waves or currents of thought which we meet with so often in the history of philosophy, and of which we had an example in the atheistic tendencies of the French encyclopedists.

Having dealt with Hegel and Schelling, it now remains to consider the religious opinions of the third of this notable group of men, the illustrious Schopenhauer.

SCHOPENHAUER

SCHOPENHAUER admits that Christianity contains a certain allegorical truth, which it shares with Buddhism and Brahmanism. The practical essence of his philosophy, likewise, the denial of the will, is akin to the Christian renunciation of the world. But interpreted narrowly and literally, Christianity is a gross error.

"Everything that is true in Christianity is also to be found in Brahmanism and Buddhism.[1] . . . A religion the foundation of which is a *single event,* and which even tries to make this the turning-point of the world and all existence, has such a weak basis that it can impossibly endure as soon as people begin to think.[2] . . . He is merely a big child who seriously believes that beings who were not human ever gave our race information concerning its existence and purpose, or concerning that of the world. There is no other revelation than that contained in the thoughts of wise men." [3]

According to Schopenhauer's philosophy, the root of all existence is the world-will, of which our own will is a part. But since this is unconscious, except where it crops forth in animal and human life, it can hardly

[1] Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena,* Philipp Reclam jun., Leipzig, Vol. II, p. 400.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 413.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 379.

be characterized by the appellation of God. True, this will is eternal: it existed before we were born, and will continue to exist after our death. But there is nothing to indicate that our life will be consciously connected with a future existence, in the sense in which tomorrow is a continuation of today. Hence we cannot speak of immortality, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. So far, then, we have a doctrine that is perfectly atheistic in content.

But in its further developments and practical conclusions, the doctrine has many points of agreement with Christianity. To begin with, there is its deprecation of the world, with its vain desires and illusory satisfactions. Schopenhauer is the apostle of pessimism, and Christianity too is pessimistic so far as the present life is concerned. Adam, according to our philosopher, is a typification of the natural man who is in every one of us, and his fall corresponds to our birth and affirmation of life. (A conception, we remember, similar to Schelling's.) Christ, on the other hand, represents the atonement which occurs when we deny the will and immolate our self. The process by which this takes place is beautifully depicted in the following words:

"Then we see the man who has passed through all the increasing degrees of affliction with the most vehement resistance, and is finally brought to the verge of despair, suddenly retire into himself, know himself and the world, change his whole nature, rise above himself and all suffering, as if purified and sanctified by it, in inviolable peace, blessedness, and sublimity, willingly renounce everything he previously desired with

all his might, and joyfully embrace death. It is the refined silver of the denial of the will to live that suddenly comes forth from the purifying flame of suffering. It is salvation." [1]

As is apparent, a veritable process of conversion. And the significance of Schopenhauer's position is especially great, since it goes with an avowal of atheism. In Tolstoi's *Confession*, we shall see, there is a depiction of conversion which is thoroughly religious in content. Carlyle, in his *Sartor Resartus*, has traced an analogous process which, while not religious in any narrow and specific sense, is still so in its general background. But with Schopenhauer there is no religious accompaniment at all. The case is highly instructive, and lends plausibility to the view advanced on a previous page, that we are dealing with a natural development of the human soul, which is independent of the particular beliefs that are held, but inherent in the nature of the heart and mind.

[1] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., Ltd., London, 1891, Vol. I, p. 507.

NIETZSCHE

NIETZSCHE began as an admirer of Schopenhauer, but the ultimate development of his philosophy brought him to conclusions which were as divergent as possible from those of the great pessimist. If Schopenhauer found the highest good in the denial of the will, Nietzsche enthusiastically preached its affirmation. He gloried in life,—with all its desires and yearnings, satisfactions and sorrows. He was an optimist as decidedly as the other was a pessimist.

Accordingly, his religious views, while agreeing to a certain extent with those of Schopenhauer, also revealed characteristic differences. Like Schopenhauer, he saw no truth in religion when interpreted narrowly and literally; but unlike him, he also denied its symbolic value, and deprecated its system of ethics.

In short, he was an out and out irreligionist, an irreconcilable atheist. Christianity, God, immortality,—yes, religion itself were unhesitatingly cast overboard by him.

"What thinker," he says, "still needs the hypothesis of a God? . . . No religion, direct or indirect, either as dogma or as allegory, has ever contained a truth." [1]

[1] Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human,* T. N. Foulis, Edinburgh and London, 1910, Nos. 28 and 110.

The doctrine of immortality is characterized by him as "the great lie." [1]

But it is Christianity which is selected as the object of his most ferocious attacks, the target of his most venomous arrows. "It is indecent nowadays to be a Christian." [2]

Contrary to most dissenters, his antagonism is not based merely on disagreement as to the facts and theories propounded by Christianity, but extends even to its system of ethics. Whereas most writers extol the Christian virtues and ideals, Nietzsche finds them opposed to the highest good of mankind. He loves the strong, heroic qualities in man, not those—like pity and humility—which tend to make him weak. The consciousness of sin, especially, is a deplorable contribution to human suffering. And Christianity must be thrown off, if humanity is to develop along strong and healthy lines.

"Christianity has sided with everything weak, low and botched [3] . . . it takes the side of everything idiotic, it utters a curse upon "intellect" [4] . . . its ends are only *bad* ends: the poisoning, the calumniation and the denial of life, the contempt of the body, the degradation and self-pollution of man by virtue of the concept sin." [5]

In fine, he calls Christianity "the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means are too

[1] Nietzsche, *The Antichrist,* T. N. Foulis, 1915, p. 185.
[2] *Ibid.,* No. 38.
[3] *Ibid.,* No. 5.
[4] *Ibid.,* No. 52.
[5] *Ibid.,* No. 56.

venomous, too underhand, too underground and too *petty* . . . the one immortal blemish of mankind." [1]

The very name of the work in which he attacks Christianity with especial vigor—*The Antichrist*—is characteristic of his attitude. In short, never yet did a great writer oppose the Christian religion with such hatred and venom. He was its most uncompromising foe, its bitterest detractor. As such he occupies, in our list of thinkers, the pole opposite to that of Pascal. As Pascal was an out and out Christian, emotionally and intellectually, so Nietzsche stands as the embodiment of naked, natural humanity, without metaphysical background, without God, immortality, and religion.

[1] *Ibid.*, No. 62.

EMERSON

EMERSON'S views on religion are peculiarly difficult to state. Though most of his writings deal with this and allied subjects, he gives no distinct formulation of his creed. Religion permeates his every utterance, but is nowhere clearly expressed.

There is hardly a man to whom the term "God-intoxicated" is more appropriate, but none who is more elusive when you try to pin him down to definite statements.

Essentially, though, we may characterize his attitude as an entirely personal and subjective one. Like the mystics, he receives his enlightenment from within: God is revealed to him directly, and without the need of forms or rituals. Special revelations may have had their value in past times, but they fail to harbor the truth in any exclusive sense; they draw their strength from the inner experience of those to whom they were vouchsafed, and this may be shared by any one at any time and place. The inner experience, the direct communion with God,—that is the all-important thing; more valuable by far than any teaching that is externally transmitted from man to man.

A few quotations from our philosopher himself will make this position clearer. We shall begin with several of a heterodox nature.

"The faith that stands on authority is not faith. The reliance on authority measures the decline of religion, the withdrawal of the soul [1] . . . Jesus would absorb the race; but Tom Paine or the coarsest blasphemer helps humanity by resisting this exuberance of power [2] . . . I and my neighbors have been bred in the notion that unless we came soon to some good church,—Calvinism, or Behmenism, or Romanism, or Mormonism,—there would be a universal thaw or dissolution. . . . Yet we make shift to live. Men are loyal. Nature has self-poise in all her works; certain proportions in which oxygen and azote combine, and not less a harmony in faculties, a fitness in the spring and the regulator. The decline of the influence of Calvin, or Fénelon, or Wesley, or Channing, need give us no uneasiness. The builder of heaven has not so ill constructed his creature as that the religion, that is, the public nature, should fall out: the public and the private element, like north and south, like inside and outside, like centrifugal and centripetal, adhere to every soul, and cannot be subdued except the soul is dissipated. God builds his temple in the heart on the ruins of churches and religions." [3]

And now a quotation of the opposite tenor, showing the emphasis which Emerson puts on the truths of religion.

"Unlovely, nay, frightful, is the solitude of the soul

[1] Emerson, *Essays,* First Series, Boston, 1896, p. 276. The quotations from Emerson's Works in this chapter are made by permission of and special arrangement with Houghton Mifflin Company.

[2] *Essays,* Second Series, p. 239.

[3] Emerson, *Conduct of Life,* Boston, 1895, p. 195.

which is without God in the world. . . . To see men pursuing in faith their varied action, warm-hearted, providing for their children, loving their friends, performing their promises,—what are they to this chill, houseless, fatherless, aimless Cain, the man who hears only the sound of his own footsteps in God's resplendent creation? To him, it is no creation; to him, these fair creatures are hapless spectres: he knows not what to make of it. To him, heaven and earth have lost their beauty. How gloomy is the day, and upon yonder shining pond what melancholy light! I cannot keep the sun in heaven, if you take away the purpose that animates him. The ball, indeed, is there, but his power to cheer, to illuminate the heart as well as the atmosphere, is gone forever. It is a lamp-wick for meanest uses. The words, *great, venerable,* have lost their meaning; every thought loses all its depth and has become mere surface." [1]

A prominent trait of the writings of Emerson is their optimism and power to cheer. In this they are probably unequalled by any other writings in the whole domain of literature. Words like his produce a sense of that blessedness which we elsewhere see arising as the result of a spiritual rebirth. But there is no antecedent misery, no struggle with a corrupt lower self that must be overcome. Consequently, if there is any truth to James' division of human beings into the once-born and twice-born, Emerson would be a prominent example of the former category. He is

[1] Emerson, *Lectures and Biographical Sketches,* Boston, 1895, p. 213.

decidedly once-born, as Carlyle and Tolstoi were twice-born. He seems to have been endowed from birth with the spirit of blessedness; serene, godlike exaltation is his native element.

IBSEN

ONE of the great cultural powers of modern times was Ibsen. Though confining his writings to the domain of drama, he had a wide-spread influence on his contemporaries, and left his impress on the spirit of the age.

His religious views are difficult to state, as he seems to have given no exact formulation of them. But we are probably justified in saying that, as he was opposed to so much that was traditional and ossified in the life around him, so also with reference to the teachings of the church. Indeed, his attitude is already clearly indicated in a poem written in his twentieth year, entitled *Doubt and Hope.* It depicts the terrors of a storm, and in the course of its lines Ibsen says:

Ah once, yes once, when I was small,
I prayed to God above
For parents and for brethren all,
With words of fervent love;
But that was in the days of yore.
My prayers are now forgot;
I find no comfort in them more,
Neglect has been their lot.

To be sure, he adds in the last stanza:

But no, despair shall not be mine.
I'll heed the inner call,

And refuge seek in hope divine,
In God, the source of all.[1]

But this "conversion" under duress naturally counts for little when compared with the confessions of the preceding lines.

The later works which yield us most light concerning Ibsen's religious convictions are *Brand* and *Emperor and Galilean.* As already stated elsewhere in this volume, it is precarious to draw conclusions regarding an author's views from the words which he puts into the mouths of his characters. But from all that we know of Ibsen, we are probably right in attributing to him the sentiments which follow, and which are expressed by Brand in the play of like name:

No, I am not a preachifier,
Nor do I speak as priests for hire;
I may not even Christian be,

. . . . .

Nor do I in my work pretend
Or church or dogma to defend;
From some beginning both are dated,
And so it easily may be
That we the end of both shall see.[2]

Emperor and Galilean likewise offers us a clue to the author's views. In this drama we have a portrayal of the conflict between two ideals and conceptions of life,—*viz:* between antique paganism and

[1] Ibsen, *Werke,* Berlin, S. Fischer, Vol. I, p. 176.
[2] Jaeger, *Henrik Ibsen,* A. C. McClurg and Company, Chicago, 1890, p. 179.

the Christianity by which it was supplanted. Ibsen seems to be satisfied with neither, as he speaks of a "third empire," superseding both of the others, in which their drawbacks shall be absent. We are reminded, in this connection, of the "third revelation" to which Lessing refers in his *Education of the Human Race,*—already mentioned in this volume,—which is to replace both the Old and New Testaments.

Personally, Ibsen was fond of reading the Bible, but when this fact was favorably spoken of by religious people, he would gruffly explain: "It is only for the sake of the language." [1] As to his more detailed religious views, to repeat, we have very little information. We can only surmise that he was not a Christian in the usual sense, and still less an admirer of the forms and traditions in which Christianity was embodied.

[1] Gosse, *Henrik Ibsen,* Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1908, p. 221.

TOLSTOI

THERE have been few writers more direct and outspoken than Tolstoi. He never hesitated to tell his opinions, and his style was the clearest imaginable; consequently there is little possibility of mistaking his meaning.

In his youth Tolstoi abandoned the creed of his fathers, and thereafter lived for many years in a state of comparative irreligiousness. Then he had an inner crisis, which resulted in reconversion to the Christian faith. This he accepted in its entirety for some time, taking part in all its external observances like any other orthodox believer. But as time went on, the unreasonableness of many of the church doctrines became evident to his mind. Voicing his opinions in his usual open and straightforward manner, he finally, in 1901, drew from the Holy Synod an edict of excommunication. He answered this in a characteristic statement, giving a clear and candid exposition of his views. To obtain a knowledge of these, nothing would be necessary beyond a repetition of his words. But as this would cover considerable space, and condensation is not easily possible, we shall avail ourselves of a passage from another work, so far as the negative half of his creed is concerned, and thereupon quote from the answer to the Synod in stating the more positive side of his views.

"No religion ever proclaimed statements so obviously out of agreement with reason and contemporary human knowledge. Not to mention the absurdities of the Old Testament, such as the creation of light before the sun, the creation of the world six thousand years ago, the housing of all the species of animals in the ark, and various immoral abominations such as the direction to murder children and whole populations at the command of God; not to mention also that absurd sacrament, about which Voltaire even used to say that though many different religions had existed and still existed, never before had there been one the principal religious act of which consisted of eating one's God —to pass these things by, what can be more senseless than the assertions that the mother of God was both a mother and a virgin—that the sky opened and a voice was heard issuing from it—that Jesus flew away into the skies and is now sitting somewhere there on the right hand of the Father—or that God is One and Three, and not three Gods like Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, but One, and at the same time Three? And what can be more immoral than that awful theology according to which God is cruel and revengeful, punishes all men for the sin of Adam, and to save them sends His Son to the earth knowing beforehand that men will kill him and will be cursed for doing so; and that the salvation of men from sin consists in being christened, or in believing that all this is actually true, that the Son of God was killed by men for the salvation of men, and that those who do not believe this will be punished by God with eternal torments? So that leaving aside the additions, as some regard them,

to the chief dogmas of this religion, such as the beliefs in the various relics and *ikons,* of the Virgin Mary, of petitionary prayers directed to various saints according to their specialities,—leaving aside also the Protestant doctrine of predestination,—the foundations of this religion, established by the Nicene Creed, and recognized by every one, are so absurd and immoral, and are developed to such a degree of contradiction to normal human feeling and reason, that men cannot believe them." [1]

And now a short statement of the positive elements of his belief, as contained in the answer to the Synod, referred to above:

"I believe in God, whom I comprehend as Spirit, as Love, as the Source of all. I believe that He is in me and I in Him. I believe that the Will of God is the most clearly and comprehensively expressed in the teaching of the man Christ,—to regard whom as God, and to pray to whom, I deem the greatest sacrilege. I believe that the true welfare of man lies in the fulfilment of the Will of God; and that His will consists in men loving each other, and therefore behaving toward others as they desire that others should behave with them. . . . I believe that the meaning of the life of every man, therefore, lies only in the increase of love in himself; that this increase of love leads the individual man in this life toward greater and greater welfare; that after death it gives the greater welfare the more love there be in the man; and that, at the same time, more than anything else, it contributes to

[1] Tolstoi, *Kingdom of God, What is Art? What is Religion?* New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., p. 220.

the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, *i. e.*, to an order of life where the discord, deceit, and violence which now reign will be replaced by free agreement, truth, and brotherly love between men." [1]

Not only did Tolstoi express these opinions verbally, but he endeavored to carry them out in practice. For example, he made the principle of non-resistance to evil his own,—a principle which is based on the teaching of Christ, but which is so opposed to instinct and the apparent interests of men that few have ever seriously tried to embody it in their conduct. As the result of his earnest endeavors to live up to the precepts of the Master, his life had something holy and Christ-like about it; and if one were asked to name that man in modern times who came nearest the Nazarene in teachings and action, one would inevitably think of Tolstoi. We may add that his book entitled *My Confession* is one of the most remarkable descriptions of the process of religious conversion ever penned by man.

Theoretically Tolstoi resembles Matthew Arnold in his rejection, on the one hand, of what is legendary and irrational in the Christian religion, and his glorification, on the other, of what is essential in it. Only he is more intense and vehement, both in regard to the positive and negative aspects of his teaching. Temperamentally he was allied to Carlyle. There was the same moral earnestness, the same gloomy, sombre aspect of thought, coupled with a similar proneness to violent outbursts of feeling and indignation. The re-

[1] Tolstoi, *Complete Works,* New York, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., Vol. XX, p. 317.

ligious outlook, too, was similar; only Carlyle, though disagreeing with Christian theology, laid comparatively little stress on the negative aspects of the matter, but constantly emphasized the truths of religion as opposed to skepticism; while Tolstoi was equally assiduous on both sides of the question. He was fervent in attacking a false theology, and equally fervent in proclaiming the saving truths of religion. His views, accordingly, are appropriate as a closing chapter of our examination. He sums up admirably the trend of thought which great thinkers for generations have been more and more adopting. He denies the claims of a narrow and literal theology; but he champions the cause of essential belief.

CONCLUSION

IN summing up the results of our investigation, the first thing to impress us is the sharp difference between the religious views of the thinkers who lived in the 17th century and those who came after them. The former, we may recall, embraced six men. If we include Berkeley, who followed closely on their heels, we have only one out of seven—Spinoza—who did not profess Christianity. All believed—or at least pretended to believe—in the tenets of the church. But of the twenty-three thinkers who followed these seven, not a single one was strictly and unmistakably orthodox; in fact, only one or two could be designated as Christian in any sense at all agreeing with the traditional one. It is clear that this difference in beliefs is not due to any difference in the reasoning powers of the men. It would be wrong to place all these men in a row, and declare that the first seven just happened to affirm what the others denied. If reasoning alone were involved, there would not be such unanimity of verdict. Several of the earlier men would undoubtedly be found refusing to accept the truths of Christianity, and quite a number of the later ones would range themselves on the side of the believers. No, the unanimity with which the earlier thinkers say yes and the later ones no, must be based on something

which the men of each group had in common,—and this was the spirit of the respective ages.

The spirit of the 17th century was such as to discountenance a separation from the church: hence the agreement which our earliest thinkers show in adhering to that institution. It is marvelous, indeed, to what extent we are governed—even the most independent of us—by tradition and authority. Even today, in this age of comparative toleration and freedom of thought, it is difficult,—yes, impossible,—to escape their influence. A perfectly unbiased, neutral condition of mind would be that in which one belief or religion had the same chance for adoption as another. Yet imagine an inquirer among us trying to make up his mind concerning the religious beliefs of the world! What chance would Buddhism or Brahmanism have in his case? Absolutely none! These religions would not even be considered by him as serious possibilities, but would be ruled out of court before they ever had an opportunity to be heard. The same, of course, would be true of Christianity so far as the other countries were concerned: it would be as unthinkable for an individual in a Moslem centre to embrace the tenets of the Nazarene as it would be for us to become disciples of Mohammed.

Now, if this condition exists even with us, if we have not yet attained the vantage ground of perfect neutrality and impartial receptivity in regard to beliefs, it is clear that the situation was even more hopeless in the 17th century. Ecclesiastical authority, as mentioned, was so powerful and so much a matter of course, that it was almost out of the question to doubt

the truth of Christianity. In part, of course, this was also due to the absence of many elements of knowledge which are at our disposal today, and which have a bearing on the case. Science had not yet made the great progress which is the glory of modern times; above all, the doctrine of evolution was still unknown. People had not the knowledge of comparative religion which we have since gained. And Biblical criticism was a field quite untilled.

All in all, the situation in the 17th century was such as to make an unbiased and reliable judgment on religious questions difficult, if not impossible. For this reason it will hardly be feasible to make a summing-up of our thinkers which shall include all thirty of the men. There are two distinct groups among these men, and they must be treated as such. The first group includes seven thinkers, as we have seen, of whom six were thoroughly Christian. Even the seventh, we are tempted to believe, would have professed the Christian faith, had he not been born and brought up a Hebrew. More important for our purpose, of course, are the opinions of the twenty-three men who followed Berkeley. These have been moulded by the freer influences of the last two centuries, and thus command greater weight in regard to illumination and guidance. The most prominent feature of their views is the almost unanimous repudiation of the tenets of current Christianity. Not a single one of these men, we have seen, was unquestionably and thoroughly orthodox. Browning probably comes nearest to this position, yet even his opinions, we remember, were by no means clear, and he certainly held some

views which were inconsistent with the current teachings of the church.

But while practically all of our modern reasoners thus rejected the strict dogmas of Christianity, they by no means subscribed to the tenets of atheism. The great majority were believers in a deity. Only about four could be classed as infidels, though four or five others would be designated as agnostics, or as such whose faith amounted to little more than a hope or the admission of a possibility. Nevertheless, two thirds of our twenty-three men were more or less firmly convinced of the existence of God. The doctrine of immortality, to be sure, was not defended quite so generally, although it was upheld by about half of the total number (*i. e.,* of twenty-three). Many of the believers recognized a deep underlying truth and beauty in the Christian faith, and some even proclaimed their acceptance of its teachings in a broader sense. Such were Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Carlyle and Tolstoi. Tolstoi, in his *Confession*, describes a course of experience which is practically identical with conversion. Carlyle depicts a similar transformation of inner life in his *Sartor Resartus,* though without the specific religious framework. Spinoza and Fichte lay stress on a state of mind which is akin to the blessedness arising from the Christian surrender of self. Even Schopenhauer, pessimist and unbeliever though he is, finds the closest approach to happiness of which mankind is capable in a denial of the self, and lauds the saints of religion as the greatest human beings.

Taken all in all, the message of our philosophers is calculated to fill us with encouragement. They reject

those awful tenets of the traditional faith according to which the great majority of mankind are doomed to eternal torture; but they likewise agree that the universe is not a homeless desert, but is ruled by a beneficent power, which cares for us and on which we may lean in moments of weakness and distress. And they give us reason to believe that life may not be ended when we say good-bye to this world, but that we may pass on to higher realms of endeavor and satisfaction.

APPENDIX

TO illustrate the difficulties and dangers which were formerly involved in the free exercise of thought, we shall review some of the more important instances of persecution,—either directly by the church or by the authorities under the influence of the church. We shall not go into the innumerable cases involved in the Reformation, which have a more purely religious character,—such as the martyrdoms of Huss, Savonarola and Ramus,—but shall confine ourselves to the persecution of men whose ideas were of influence beyond the strictly religious confines.

Chronologically we may begin with the burning of Servetus, in the year 1553. This cruel fate was consummated with the sanction of the reformer, Calvin. It illustrates to what horrors religious fanaticism may lead.

Next in time, and still more important, owing to the prominence of the victim, was the death at the stake of the illustrious Italian philosopher, Giordano Bruno. Bruno was one of the group of brilliant southern intellects who ushered in the period of modern philosophy, but the church was not receptive to new ideas, and put an end to the daring innovator in the usual manner.

One of his contemporaries, the Italian Vanini, suffered a similar fate at Toulouse, in the year 1619.

It is peculiar that the work in which the traditional view of the universe was overthrown, *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium,* and which was in conflict with the opinions which were tacitly involved, if not directly expressed, in the Bible, should have been dedicated by its author, Copernicus, to the pope. Meanwhile, the church was not slow in detecting the dangers involved in the new theory, and, Copernicus being dead, it put its heavy hand on his disciple, the illustrious Galileo. It is well known how this brilliant scientist was obliged to recant, and declare that it was the earth and not the sun which stood still. Whether the anecdote according to which he added in an undertone "And yet it moves" is true or not, is uncertain. Certain it is, however, that it did move, and it has been moving ever since, despite all threats and edicts of ecclesiastical bigots.

As has already been mentioned, the experience of Galileo made a deep impression on Descartes; indeed, it caused him to stay the publication of a work which he feared might arouse antagonism. This aspect of the matter must also be borne in mind. Not only did the church—and in using this term we are including Protestantism as well as Catholicism—endeavor to crush theories and authors which were not agreeable, but it doubtless kept many men from writing who might have enriched the world by their thoughts. How much has been lost in this way, it is of course impossible to estimate. We only know of the actual persecutions; the potential ones, the books never written and thoughts never uttered, are known only to the omniscient Spirit of the Universe.

To return to the realm of the actual, we have the case of Rousseau, recorded in the foregoing pages, who was obliged to flee from France, and who was hounded in the name of religion wherever he went, until he found refuge in the British Isles. Voltaire, his fellow-countryman, was also anathema, but he was deft and lucky enough to keep out of the embrace of his enemies.

Passing to German soil, we find a similar state of affairs. The eminent philosopher Wolff, professor at the University of Halle, being attacked on account of the supposed irreligious character of his teachings, was expelled from the city and country in which he was residing under pain of death. This was in the year 1723. As time went on the methods of persecution became less severe, to be sure, so that toward the end of the century we no longer find Lessing banished or threatened with death on account of the heterodox views brought forward in his controversy with Pastor Goeze, but merely forbidden to continue that controversy. Kant likewise had to desist for a season from writing on religious subjects, owing to a hint from "above." And in 1799 Fichte, then professor at Jena, was attacked for his alleged atheism, the result of which was that he left his chair in order to avoid the impending official reprimand.

It is but fair to say that England was remarkably free from the persecutions which disgraced other countries of Europe, a fact which stands out as a bright page in the history of that nation.

In regard to America, it is true that there have been no burnings at the stake. But it is an accusation

often made, and one which likely has basis in fact, that a man who stands foremost in the ranks of those who fought for national independence and liberty, Thomas Paine, has received but scanty appreciation at the hands of historians and the public, on account of his radical religious views. A deplorable fact, which proves that narrowness of mind is confined to no race or country, but finds a home even under the freest institutions.

Within the last century official persecutions have practically ceased. A man may have difficulty, at times, in obtaining or holding a position by reason of his religious views, but he is no longer in danger of being thrown into prison or punished for heresy. The church now confines itself to the weapons of abuse and ridicule; and it must be in the memory of all who have passed the middle period of life, what effective use it made of those weapons against that modest and noble, yes we might almost say holy man of science, Charles Darwin. But light and truth will prevail. Darwinism has come to be accepted by all but the backwoodsmen, and the church is now without any universal object of attack. Let us hope that it will finally, after two thousand years, reach the level of toleration and brotherhood, cease its crucifixion of noble men, and adopt the teachings proclaimed by its founder.

PARTIAL LIST OF WRITINGS IN WHICH THE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF THE MEN CONSIDERED IN THIS BOOK ARE LAID DOWN

MILTON:	A Treatise on Christian Doctrine.
LOCKE:	Essay Concerning Human Understanding.
DESCARTES:	Meditations.
PASCAL:	Thoughts.
SPINOZA:	Ethics. Theologico—Political Treatise.
LEIBNITZ:	Theodicy.
BERKELEY:	Alciphron: or, The Minute Philosopher.
HUME:	The Natural History of Religion. Of Miracles. Of the Immortality of the Soul.
ROUSSEAU:	Emile.
HOLBACH:	System of Nature.
KANT:	Critique of Pure Reason. Critique of Practical Reason. *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft.*
FICHTE:	Critique of all Revelation. *Anweisung zum seligen Leben.*

LESSING:	Controversial Writings against Goeze. Education of the Human Race. Nathan the Wise.
CARLYLE:	Sartor Resartus.
JOHN STUART MILL:	Three Essays on Religion.
MATTHEW ARNOLD:	Literature and Dogma. God and the Bible. St. Paul and Protestantism. Last Essays on Church and Religion.
RENAN:	Recollections of My Youth.
SCHOPENHAUER:	On Religion (in Parerga and Paralipomena).
NIETZSCHE:	The Antichrist.
TOLSTOI:	My Confession. My Religion. What is Religion?

MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS

A STATEMENT OF UNBELIEF

A STATEMENT OF UNBELIEF

I

I WAS at church. After years of absence I entered the little wooden building once more, and listened to the words that had so often agitated me with hope and fear.

The impressions that I received during the brief hours of the service were probably as numerous as those which many a regular attendant had reaped during the entire period of my absence. I found, not a quiet place of meditation, but a rich symphony of life, a maze of intricate, throbbing human interests.

There was the mischievous boy, wriggling about in his seat, for whom toy whistles and chocolate drops formed the nucleus of existence; the gray-haired deacon, with eyes growing dim to the sights of this world, but opening to the glories of the next; the portly elder, crediting himself with pious zeal in the ledger of heaven, but mistaking love of authority for zeal; the young lover, sending affection-scented glances toward the maiden in the choir, and this same maiden, receiving them in her innocent blue eyes and refracting them down to her palpitating heart; the sad man of learning, seeking for heart-stimulation, but finding nothing to stay on his intellectual stomach; the earnest minister, who has laid aside toy-whistles and worldly

honor, and who is intent only on the welfare of the human souls entrusted to him,—today more especially that of the wreath of young candidates for confirmation with which he is surrounded, the flowers of which he has nurtured individually and tied together with the ribbon of a common confession.

What a medley of interesting humanity,—of emotion, desire, purpose, and thought! What a variety of spiritual stomachs, and all to be fed by the identical loaf! Will you be equal to the task, my dear minister, do you possess recipes cunning enough to satisfy such a diversity of appetites?

Alas, it must be confessed, the loaf is not agreeable to all, and the judgment as to its total efficacy vacillates as we turn from face to face.

For the boy the sermon is non-existent. It represents a fixed length of time to be sat out, which he fills with plans for the afternoon's sport. His neighbor reproves him for his restlessness, but believe me, dear neighbor, the lad deserves no censure: as well might he invite you to join him in his childish games—count marbles and gloat over sticks of candy—as for you to expect sustained attention from his active little mind.

For the young man, full of the champagne of animal spirits, the sermon is a collection of dry nouns and verbs, a meaningless concatenation of sentences, which fails to hook itself on to his interests with a single word. Everything that he endows with value—pleasure, riches, worldly power, honor, fame—is met with an unintelligible veto, everything opposed to instinct

held up as the ideal of conduct. Can we blame him for becoming estranged from a church that has nothing but paralysis to offer him? The old impatience which long ago drove me out of the church-doors comes over me again, and my heart goes out to the young man who refuses to sleep because others are tired.

Then there is the ceremony of confirmation. Would it be possible to imagine a bigger farce?

"Dost thou now, in the presence of God and of this Congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow made in thy name at thy baptism? Dost thou ratify and confirm the same, and acknowledge thyself bound to believe and to do all those things which thy parents undertook for thee?" [1]

Why not examine infants for the bar; why not sign compacts with nursing babes?

Yet over in the next pew sits a ragged tramp whose eyes are filling with tears as he follows the ceremony at the altar. Doubtless he too stood unconcernedly before the minister once upon a time, doubtless he too was bored by many a sermon. However, in spite of the dross and the chaff with which the gospel was dealt out to him, it contained a precious core; it harbored a seed of value, which at last gives promise of growth.

And his were not the only moist eyes in the congregation, his not the only attentive ears, to which the words from the pulpit embodied a blessed experience. For many of those wrinkled men and women the

[1] *The Directory of Worship for the Reformed Church in the United States,* p. 115.

weekly sermon is their poetry, music, consolation, and hope. Take the church from these people and you despoil life of its fairest flower; you destroy their refuge from care and extinguish the beacon-light which cheers them in the midst of a dreary existence.

It is conceivable for the identical word to mean "yes" in one language and "no" in another. To the proposing lovers this outward fact or "ceremony" will mean things of vital difference, according to the language in which it is spoken; yet it is the same complex of aërial vibrations which produces the difference of effect. May not the words of the pastor, the ceremonies of the church, be regarded in a similar light, as identical phenomena which nevertheless suggest meanings of world-wide difference? To the boy, the youth, and the scholar they mean nothing; but to the venerable deacon, the devout old mother, they embody the highest truth. And may not they be right from their point of view? Have we mastered the intricacies of their language, dare we pronounce on the meaning of every word which it contains?

Who, indeed, would endeavor to determine the total influence of a church or a sermon? As well might one undertake to follow all the subtle currents of electricity, light, heat, and sound that play through and about us. Who would endeavor to accompany the bird of passage, and record what hearts it cheers with its song today, what fields it despoils of its grain tomorrow?

Two benefits of the church may be mentioned, without attempting to oppose them with corresponding detriments and draw up a resulting trial-balance of

value. In this land and age of progress, where there is no past of tradition and institution to recline upon, where no august cathedrals and legend-enwoven castles give impetus to the imagination and remind us of our debt to the past, it is the church which fulfils this office, which treasures up a wealth of poetic associations, preserves a Christmas that loosens the ice around every heart, and an Easter that brings joy to the most prosaic. Holidays, "holy days," are not made by law and command: witness the French Revolution. Nor are they guaranteed by a century. Despite the glorious memories associated with our Fourth of July, how tawdry and common the aspect of this day when compared with the gladness of Yuletide and the mysterious charm of Good Friday. The life of a nation, as of an individual, is enriched by memory, and it is the church which preserves the living memory of past ages.

Then too, the church is the home of much of the purest, most elevated feeling in the world. Whatever hypocrisy and indifference it may harbor, a glance at the loving eyes of the sister of charity, and at the clear, serene expression of the country parson, reassures us that there is a nucleus of sound value in Christian teaching. The true cathedral, to be sure, may be everywhere: the sky may be its nave and the sun its censer; yet there may be little niches in this cathedral that are visited oftener by the kind and meek, where the better feelings of the heart more commonly find vent, and where the light of heaven more frequently steals in; and these cloistered spots are the churches.

II

Yet I do not go to church. I hesitate before giving my religious contribution, and do not accompany it with the same spirit of readiness with which I support the park concerts or the agitation against political corruption.

The church may promote kindness, yet I will not promote the church. My reason refuses to accept its teachings, and I cannot work redemption with an untruth. I disbelieve through belief, and have so strong a faith in truth that I will not swerve from it even to serve my fellow-man. I may tell a falsehood in breaking disastrous news to a fond mother, but I will not be a party to an elaborate and systematic attempt to hoodwink humanity and lull it into obedience with an illusion.

The guidance of the cosmos has not been entrusted to my care: I am unable to fathom the deep ends of creation or understand the mysterious means by which they are realized. The safest course to pursue, accordingly, is to perform the duty of the hour, look things squarely in the face, and truthfully announce what I see.

I keep my balance and go about my business where the advantage of stooping and meddling is dubious. "Who, indeed, would endeavor to determine the total influence of a church or a sermon?" In spite of the apparent benefits of Christianity, who has it figured out that the religious policy he is pursuing will actually end with a greater amount on the credit than on the debit side? What has frowned on me as an evil has

often turned out to be good, and what I cherished as good has soured into an evil. While I am not sure, however, how great the benefit of orthodoxy will be, I am sure that in supporting orthodoxy I am furthering what in my innermost self I call an untruth. But shall I espouse a certain untruth for the sake of an uncertain good? Shall I not trust that inner voice which assures me that in the last instance the true and the good must coincide? Must not that which systematically and perseveringly misrepresents be opposed to the highest good, and that which is heroically true be in victorious league with it? I cannot verify this intuition, yet I have a secret faith in it, and am content to adopt it for my rule of life.

Go your ways, then, brethren of the pulpit and the pew! Accomplish what good you may, and God bless you for your noble efforts! I, for my part, must stand aloof, and withhold the assistance you request. It is a question as to the choice of masters, and I feel my affinity for Truth. I will regard your doings with perfect tolerance, and call you brethren through our common allegiance to the higher master and overseer, Duty. Perhaps we are both working for the same great ends, both subserving a common harmony, though momentarily moving toward opposite points of the moral key-board. Perhaps, if we understood the laws of cosmic thorough-bass, we should realize that both formed necessary voices in the universal symphony.

For the present, however, I must play my part, which demands my total attention: the notes are before me, and I must render them as faithfully as I can. May the result be universal discord or concord, *the notes*

are there and I must play them! You for the good by means of illusion, I for the truth at all costs. Both for good purposes and with good intentions, both on parallel tracks through the sincerity of our endeavors; but both pursuing our own paths, and like parallel lines, unable to meet without swerving from our appointed courses.

III

What makes me so sure, however, that I am working redemption with an untruth? How do I know that the words of the gospels embody illusions, and that it is not I who belong to the deluded, while my orthodox brethren are harbored on the side of truth?

In answer, it is difficult to make a beginning, difficult to choose from among the innumerable points of defense and retort. How compress into a few words all that it has taken years of slow growth to establish in the mind, all that has made me doubt and reject ever since as a youth I began to think? At most I can offer a few synopses of the courses of reasoning that expelled orthodoxy from my mind; I shall give the head-lines of my arguments, while the reader himself must carry them out in detail.

First we may admit that there is much in the Holy Scriptures to which we can freely assent. There is much of a historical nature that we may accept as we accept the statements of any accredited historical document. There is much concerning the right method of life that embodies the highest wisdom, and that is borne out by the experience of centuries.

But besides these valuable elements there are fea-

tures which refuse to assimilate with my mental constitution. I will believe that there was a leader by name of Moses, but I will not believe that he conversed with Jehovah or received the ten commandments from his hand. I will believe that there was a teacher by name of Jesus, but I will not believe that he was the unique son of God, or that he arose from the dead and flew toward heaven. The creation of the earth in six days, the preservation of terrestrial life in a boat, the miraculous conception of a human being, the arrest of the sun,—these are the indigestible elements, which the mind refuses to accept.

And it does so for the same reasons for which it withholds assent from the labors of Hercules, the exploits of Thor, the wonders of Indian religion, the witchcraft stories of the Middle Ages, and the mediumship reports that flourish so luxuriantly even under the bright sun of modern rationalism.

The marvels which every boat carries from India, nay, those which daily take place in our own spiritualistic circles, are fully as great as those recorded in Holy Writ. Yet we refuse them credence. We will not believe what our friends have witnessed and what eminent men of learning have vouched for; but we believe the same things if they happened in Palestine two thousand years ago. We look askance at the premonition of an intelligent American, if it was not put down in writing at the time of its occurrence and corroborated by trustworthy witnesses; but we accept the ancient accounts of a resurrection, even though they were not entrusted to paper until decades after the event.

The story of William Tell, about which there is

nothing intrinsically improbable and which is backed by the tradition of an entire nation, is relegated to the domain of myth. It is deemed possible that the whole world should have been duped for centuries as to the authorship of its greatest tragedy. Yet we shake our heads in holy doubt when we are told that an illusion gained currency in the Palestine backwoods at a time when illusions were as plentiful as weeds.

Is it not more likely that an illusion should have occurred in a credulous age than that the laws of happening should have been rudely pierced by a miracle? All religious writings of the olden times are spiced with miracles; why should those of the Hebrews and Christions be exempt? We reject the miracles in all other writings; why not in those of the Hebrews and Christians?

However, it is not only to miracles in the narrower sense that we must object, but to everything miraculously unique and exceptional in the Divine Book. First, there is the assertion that the Bible is the Word of God, in a sense in which this cannot be maintained of any other document. Then there is the assertion that a belief in this book, together with all that it implies—baptism, the observance of one day in seven, and so forth—is essential to salvation. And finally there are the fantastic occurrences which constitute the miracles in the narrower sense of the word.

To be sure, I am not a theological specialist, and have not devoted years to the study of Hebrew history and philology. I may be answered by arguments concerning particular words and dates, may be confronted with historical evidences that certain miraculous events

did really occur, and that the truth of Christianity is accordingly established.

However, I have neither the time nor the inclination to go into these matters. The history of polemics on this subject reveals an endless interchange of assertions and rebuttals, one line of argument being overthrown by newer discoveries, and these again being met by later arguments of a reactionary nature. For him who has the leisure, it may be interesting to follow this theoretic see-saw, and the subtleties evolved may of course have a bearing on the truth or falsity of the things in dispute. I will not believe, however, that they have a bearing on my salvation. I do not believe that salvation depends on the amount of one's technical knowledge about Semitic philology. As well might one say that it was determined by the colour of one's hair or formation of the teeth.

No, I have pondered considerably on these matters, and my conclusions have been negative. The business of life presses, and it is time to arrive at a decision. To the best of my insight, I cannot accept what is indicative of the divine, supernatural character of Holy Writ; I am forced to reject all that appears strange and fantastic in it, and if I do this, I retain merely an ordinary, human book, with ordinary, human communications. I do not believe that closer study will upset this conclusion, for the tendency of investigation has been to shake rather than confirm the authority of the divine writings. Neither do I believe that my lot after death will depend on the school of historical interpretation to which I belong. I shall not be saved or rejected according to the nature of my

theoretical conclusions, according to my readiness to accept the witchcraft and materialization stories on which orthodoxy builds its faith.

IV

But why not adopt this skeptical view and nevertheless support the church? Why not merely proclaim Christ as the embodiment of the noblest life, thereby doing no violence to the reasoning instincts and yet joining in the Christian mission and working for the elevation of mankind?

We can do this, to be sure, but as soon as we relinquish the "divine" significance of the Bible, the electric current which vivified its words is turned off, and they drop down lifelessly, like iron-filings from a demagnetized object. If the charm of an amulet does not reside in the occult qualities of this particular object, but in the disinfectant, medicinal virtues which it shares with innumerable other objects, the amulet ceases to be such in the proper sense of the word, and falls into the category of ordinary pharmaceutic devices.

So Jesus and the Bible are amulets only while we regard them as unique and peculiar manifestations of a divine energy. The divinity alleged to reside in them is the electric current which holds us with magnetic power. Turn off this current and the attraction ceases; like filings, we drop away and roll wherever gravity pulls us.

Nor will the assertion that Jesus and the Bible are unique inasmuch as they embody the highest manifestations of virtue, give them a special claim on our devo-

tion. Once relinquish the theory of divinity, and such claims are open to the same objections as the demand for the worship of any other great man or book. We may oppose them with the same arguments with which we should meet the request to set aside a special day for the admiration of Socrates, Epictetus, Carlyle or Spinoza. You may regard Jesus as the perfect man, but I may see as much perfection in Marcus Aurelius, another will prefer Goethe, a third Emerson, and a fourth Napoleon! Who is to decide in this maze of opinions, who to establish the standard of perfection?

The special divinity of Christ is the one allegiance-compelling feature, which rules out all doubts and razes all individual opinions; once give this up and the founder of Christianity has no greater claim on our adoration than any particular writer or work of secular literature. While Jesus can say: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," we have only to accept or reject his statement, follow or turn away from the road he opens. Reduce him to a mere doctor of morality, on the contrary, and the alternatives are legion. Admit that the salutary influence of Mecca resides only in the sunlight that brightens its streets and the food its inns supply, and the necessity of going to Mecca ceases.

And what though Jesus may on the whole embody the highest ideal of life, must every one therefore reserve a special hour for his worship? Ideals, too, are relative matters, and the people we set up as models, like those we choose for matrimonial mates, depend on our special needs. The timid, hesitating person must be inspired by resolute men and heroes,

the unscrupulous man of action by philosophers and saints. The tone *e* may go well with *c*, but *f* requires *a* for its mate.

Then, too, there is a cyclical succession in our ideals, similar to the farmer's rotation of crops. Like certain plants, heroes and ideals often bloom but once; they spread joy and perfume for a season, but ever after possess only the faded glory of pressed flowers. They thrill us and vivify us with power, but presently descend from the zenith of glory and set in the west of indifference.

Let us not, therefore, insist on this hero or that ideal as the constant, unique Mecca of devotion; let us give free scope to the affinities of the soul, and allow the stars to rise and fall in their natural order; then Jesus will also soar resplendently to the zenith, when the proper time arrives, and shed pure, sweet light on the wondering eyes beneath.

V

Now, however, let me extend my hand across the gap which seems to separate me from my Christian brethren, and affirm our fundamental unanimity.

Have you ever considered the question: which human beings belong together and which do not? Do lodge and party badges, certificates of occupation, castes, nationalities, races, and creeds separate men into classes and mark them off as good and bad, brethren and enemies? Do not the real differences run deeper, and, ridiculing our artificial human fences,

unite the most diverse into secret fraternities, of which natural affinities are the insignia?

Imagine four boys at school, doing an example in arithmetic. A uses the right method and obtains the correct answer, B uses the proper method but makes a mistake in his figuring and obtains a wrong result; C copies the answer of A, D that of B. Which of these boys belong together: A and C, with the right answer, as opposed to B and D, with the wrong one; or A and B, with the right method, as opposed to the other two? Assuredly the latter would be the proper division, according to which the standings of the pupils would be determined.

In life there is a similar distinction: it is the opposition between practical and theoretic faith. Theoretic faith is what we ordinarily designate by this term—the conscious assent by the mind to certain propositions, the mental affirmation that certain things are true. Practical faith, on the contrary, may be defined as the fitness of a line of conduct to the actual constitution of things,—in our particular case to the constitution of the universe. If a man's motives and acts are such as would fit into a world ruled by a divine power and in which souls continue to exist after death, he may be said to possess a practical faith in such a world. If, on the other hand, they agree with a world without higher outlook, he is a practical atheist, no matter what his verbal statement of belief.

Now, practical faith may be compared to the methods of the school-boys, theoretic faith to their answers. The latter resembles an oral protestation of love, the

former is this love itself. In theoretic faith the intellect declares itself in harmony with the Infinite, in practical belief the entire personality stretches forth its arms toward the Infinite and proclaims acceptance of its decrees.

Theoretic faith by itself is a promise without fulfillment, a *façade* without background; practical faith is a serviceable building, in which only the completing *façade* is wanting. It is the substance of life, which has not yet found its mental mirror. It corresponds to the great forces of gravity, faithfully and unconsciously doing their work of holding the solar system together, and unmindful of the fact that the Newton has not yet arrived to formulate their workings into a recognizable law.

Here, too, various alternatives are possible. A man may use the right method and get the right answer; or he may make a mistake in his syllogistic calculations and land on the wrong side. Conversely he may use a faulty procedure and yet get hold of the correct result. The ideal condition, of course, is that in which both method and conclusion are correct. Where this is not realized, the method is more important than the answer. It is the criterion or badge according to which people should be grouped, and on the basis of which our heavenly teacher will determine our rank in the school of life. Oral confessions of faith and intellectual beliefs do not combine and separate people into classes, but actions, methods, and attitudes. Orthodox and heterodox, accordingly, may belong together, even though their lips pronounce different words and their brains think different thoughts. The true

and noble in the Christian ranks may be closely affiliated with the distrusted infidels, if only the latter are also true and noble.[1]

VI

But do the brains of believers and unbelievers really think different thoughts?

If a friend drops a silver dollar into my left hand, and another places a ten dollar bill into my right, I seem to have received two different amounts. However, if friend number one is worth a thousand dollars, while friend number two is rated at ten times that amount, the sums are equivalent, both representing similar fractions of the fortunes out of which they are respectively cut.

So articles of faith which are apparently incompatible may be similar with reference to their bearings and relations, while similar ones may be different. Beliefs, too, have essential as well as superficial as-

[1] It might be objected that we were indulging in a mere trick of words, and that practical faith, as described, were not faith at all, the opposition being the plain old distinction between works and faith. Even so, the relative value of the two would be the same. But in its deeper sense conduct indeed seems to imply a sort of unformulated faith. Ask a person whether life is worth living, and the surprised expression on his face will show that he has never considered the question; yet all his acts, if he is normal, imply that he believes it *is* worth living. Or, to take a more specific example, consider Maggie's words in *The Mill on the Floss,* where, after being led away from home by Stephen Guest and told that it was impossible to return unmarried, she cries out: "Lucy will believe—she will forgive you, and—and—oh, *some* good will come by clinging to the right." Faith like this often accompanies our acts, even though it may not be as clearly formulated.

pects, and there may be an essential agreement with a superficial difference, and an essential difference with a superficial agreement.

Take the statement that the souls of the departed live at the south pole; though apparently incompatible with the supposition that they live on other planets, the difference would dwindle if we were to put the former declaration into the mouth of a mediæval reasoner, comparing it with the other as it appears in the light of modern knowledge. For the mediæval philosopher, the earth was the centre of the material universe, and the celestial luminaries circled about it as comparatively insignificant bodies. The unknown terrestrial regions thus formed the bulk of what remained of the material universe after the known regions had been subtracted. They were the outlying portions of the known world, the *other,* complementary parts, which, together with the familiar ones, constituted habitable reality.

Today, however, we know that the earth is but one among numerous coördinate planets, all revolving about a gigantic central body, while the solar system itself is but a trifling fraction of the universe. The south pole, accordingly, has assumed a different significance. The other supposedly habitable regions of the universe—especially the planets which are cool enough to support life—are now more nearly analogous to the unknown sections of former times; *they* are now the outlying, surrounding regions, the *other* parts, which remain after the familiar ones have been deducted. Expand the world-view of the mediæval reasoner, and the souls of the departed will be crowded

off the south pole and propelled into space. Contract that of the modern, and they will be drawn back from their transmundane abodes and settle in the outlying, undiscovered regions.

Far different from either of these beliefs is the theory according to which death is not a mere migration from one country to another, a change of place expressible in geographic terms, but rather a change of condition, a total metamorphosis of being. Even this, however, may be so interpreted as to coincide essentially with the other views. He who believes that the dead live elsewhere in the solar system, may be untrained in the sciences; he knows but little about south pole and planets, still less about the possibility of different cycles or powers of existence; the alterations of being of which he is cognizant are few, and are expressible only by the familiar distinctions of space, time and material form. Yet he has a dim conception of radically different modes of thought and feeling, but he dresses these differences in external variations. He has faith in transformations and metamorphoses, but he believes they could be effected by material changes. The south pole and planets, indistinct and fantastic as they are in his mind, really stand for different powers of existence; they are identified with the beyond, the otherness of being, instead of representing merely an extension of ordinary existence; they embody the alternative to the present, familiar state, the mysterious, unknown, complementary aspect of life.

It is clear, then, that apparently divergent beliefs may really be similar. Let us add another example, in which the identical statement may denote things so

radically different as to provoke either approbation or dissent, according to the angle from which it is viewed.

If a man had asserted, two hundred years ago, that it was impossible to construct brick walls downward, he would have received universal assent. Is his statement invalidated today, when our modern steel structures make it possible to begin with the upper sections of a wall and gradually proceed downward? In one sense of the word it may be, in another it is not. A wall may primarily signify the side of a house, which shuts off the building from the rest of the world and encloses the space within. It may also mean that part which supports the upper stories and roof. If the first connotation was prominent in the mind of the assertor, his statement has indeed been refuted by the modern developments of building; for walls in the sense of enclosing surfaces can be built from top to bottom. The chances are, however, that the other connotation was foremost, the statement being intended to convey the meaning that it was impossible to begin a structure with its unsupported elements, and thus to violate the laws of gravity.

In this sense the assertion is still valid; for if, indeed, it is feasible to begin with the upper parts of a wall, this is because the walls are no longer the supporting members, but merely fulfil the office of enclosing surfaces. The steel frameworks have appropriated the supporting function, and they, indeed, cannot be built downwards. But even if it should ever become practicable to do this with the help of balloons and flying-machines, even if we were able absolutely to

begin at the top, without any substructure whatever, the statement would still remain unshaken. The columns of air supporting the balloons would replace the frameworks, and gravity would maintain its rights.[1]

It is possible, then, for different statements to mean the same things, and likewise for the same statement to mean different things. But if this is true of such precise and clear-cut propositions, may it not be true, as well, of the mystic conceptions of religion? Think of the innumerable meanings that have been attached to the word "God," and then wonder that there have been differences of opinion regarding the Deity! Think of the diverse interpretations of virtue, sin, salvation, belief, creation, revelation, and immortality,—and then marvel that there should be a multiplicity of creeds! Religion, indeed, is a Tower of Babel, where one and the same thought may receive expression in a thousand different ways, and where human beings who are animated by the same purpose are totally unable to comprehend one another.

Let us not be rash, accordingly, in constructing fences between ourselves and our neighbors. Let us not be eager to fling about detractive appellations. We may not be sufficiently versed in the deeper orthography of beliefs to be sure that we are using the proper words. We may cry "atheist," while the great Father pronounces it with the accent shifted. From our distorted point of view we may see right, but if we

[1] The author has a vague impression that the idea embodied in the last two paragraphs was suggested to him, years ago, in one of Prof. Santayana's classes at Harvard. But the working-out is entirely his own.

move into the proper position the separation between the letters appears, and we may be compelled to read: a theist.

VII

The statement of unbelief has been growing paler, while the statement of belief has been emerging more and more. It could readily step forward, now, and take up the scene; but for the sake of unity it seems better to ring down the curtain and postpone its communications. Much of the preceding has been negative, but its negativity, we hope, was constructive. It teemed with promise and hope even while it destroyed. With this let us end. Let us rest on the negative conclusions as on a half cadence, regarding them as a forerunner of renewed assertion, which already foreshadows the complete cadence that is to come.

THE ERRORS OF CHRISTIANITY

THE ERRORS OF CHRISTIANITY

IN the preceding essay we touched upon the reasons which led us to reject the system of orthodox Christianity. Here we shall enter into those reasons more fully, and present a systematic array of arguments which speak against the adoption of that faith.[1]

To begin with, we must realize that we do not believe in the Christian religion because reason has convinced us of its truth. Not one out of ten churchgoers could give a rational foundation for his belief, not one out of a hundred has ever compared it with the creeds that are professed by other peoples. We simply believe because we have been taught to, and because

[1] It may be objected that the title of this essay is not accurate, that Christianity as taught by its founder is not identical with "orthodoxy", and that the heading should accordingly be made to read "The Errors of Orthodox Christianity." In answer we must repeat what was said in the introduction to the book, that we are accepting that as Christianity which has from time immemorial been taught under the name, and which is still believed in by the majority of Christians. What Christ did or did not actually teach is a question into which we do not wish to enter. But it is a fact that from the initial formulation of the Christian faith, in the early days of the church, until the most recent years, Christianity has been understood and accepted in a sense not differing appreciably from that of the orthodox system. And though many of the most enlightened theologians of today take issue with this position, and announce that the teachings of the Saviour have been grossly misrepresented, the great majority of communicants still adhere to the traditional view. So that we are justified in disregarding the conflict between theologians, and adhering to the title we have chosen.

others do so likewise. But the fact that many people assent to a thing does not make it true. Everybody had implicit faith in witches once upon a time, yet witches did not exist. And the whole world was convinced for thousands of years that the sun moved around the earth, until a wise man proved the opposite to be true. Truth is not established by ballot, and the insight of one penetrating intellect may counterbalance the unthinking judgment of millions of people. If we lived in India, we should as naturally embrace the teachings of Brahmanism as we now do those of Christianity, and our present beliefs would seem as impossible as the others. And if the Hindoo were born and bred in our midst, he would as naturally adopt Christianity as he now does his own religion, and the latter would mean nothing to him. It is all a matter of geography and environment, and thus in the last analysis of accident.

But, it may be interposed, we are more cultivated than the Hindoo, whence our beliefs are more likely to be true. It is questionable whether the Hindoo himself would assent to this estimate of relative cultivation. He might admit that we were more advanced in a material sense, but would likely deny our spiritual superiority. And even if the claim were justified, it would only establish a greater degree of truth for our religion, but not absolute truth as opposed to falsity. For the Hindoo, himself, is more cultivated than many other people, and his religion, accordingly, ought to have some truth. But the whole supposition underlying the argument is faulty. It is by no means clear that the more civilized a nation, the truer must

be its religion. As well declare that its art must be finer, or that the others have no art at all! Civilization rests on many elements and superiority may flow from any one of these. The Egyptians surpassed every nation, once upon a time, yet their religion was not true. The Greeks and Romans, likewise, were preëminent in their day, without lending certitude to the creeds which they professed. There is no outer mark of excellence to our faith, indeed, which cannot be matched elsewhere. Did the Christian belief spread rapidly? The Mohammedan spread more rapidly still. Is it held by millions of people? The Buddhistic has been held by even more. Are those who profess it highly civilized? The Greeks were equally advanced.

Now, if we thoroughly realize that our belief is not based on reasonable assent, but only on the constant reiteration of statements by our parents and teachers, it loses some of the unquestionable authority which it had, and we are ready to consider it on its merits. It has been neutralized, and stands before the bar of our judgment on a par with other beliefs.

The next step will then be to consider whether there is any internal authority for the belief, which gives it precedence over other creeds. It has been held, from time immemorial, that the Bible was a divinely inspired book, whose statements were to be accepted without question. But as we read this book, in order to learn whereon the claim is based, we are surprised to find that there is hardly any basis for such a claim. A few of the minor prophets, to be sure, begin with the phrase, "The Word of Jehovah that came unto (Hosea, Joel, etc.)"; and Revelation opens with the

specific statement that this is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him . . . and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." [1] But in regard to the Prophets, it is by no means clear exactly what the writers wished to convey with their opening statements, or how minute and detailed was the prompting to which they referred; while in any case, both here and in Revelation, the introductory words have reference only to the particular books which are introduced, and make no claim whatever regarding the half a hundred other books which constitute the body of the Bible.

Apart from this, the scriptural evidence for inspiration is based largely on the two following passages: "From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (Paul is speaking to Timothy.) Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." II Tim. iii, 15, 16. "No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." II Pet. i, 20, 21.

Is there any foundation, in these passages, for the exalted claims which have been based upon them? Let us examine the passages in detail. What does the apostle mean when he says: "inspired of God?" Does he refer to verbal dictation, like that of an employer to

[1] The Bible Text used in this volume is taken from the American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible copyright 1901 by Thomas Nelson & Sons and is used by permission.

his stenographer, or is the inspiration akin to that of Shakespeare or Goethe, when they feel the upwelling of deep thoughts. (Beethoven, we may recall, is said to have received one of his compositions directly from heaven.) Evidently there is nothing in the apostle's words to favor the former interpretation rather than the latter. Nor is there anything to delimit and describe exactly what he has in mind when he speaks of the "sacred writings" and "every scripture inspired of God." Since Timothy has known these writings from babyhood, it is likely that the books of the Old Testament alone are meant. Certainly the present epistle, from which we are quoting, cannot be included. And so we have an authority for divine inspiration in which both terms are vague: we don't know what is supposed to be inspired, and we don't know what the inspiration is supposed to consist of!

Equally unsatisfactory is the passage from Peter. To be "moved" by the Holy Ghost may refer to an influence of a most general character, far different from the exact dictation which is involved in the theory of plenary inspiration. And in regard to delimitation, the situation is more hopeless even than with the passage from Timothy. Here, again, it is likely that the Old Testament alone is meant. But this time it does not even seem to be the Old Testament in its entirety, but only the prophecies contained therein. As in the other case, the epistle from which we are quoting can certainly not be included.

So then, the New Testament is excluded from the list of writings which, on the basis of our passages, are supposed to be inspired. But if the New Testa-

ment is uninspired, there is no authority for the passages themselves, and the whole argument collapses. The situation resembles that of the men who wished to be introduced to a young lady. "You introduce me first," suggested the one, "then I will introduce you!" So the New Testament, uninspired, is supposed to give credence to the Old, whereupon the Old will most likely turn round and substantiate the New! Or, to choose another example, the situation is like that of the man who wished to cash a check. Being asked to identify himself, he brought forward a friend, but alas! this friend was himself unknown to the officials of the bank. A claim has value only if the one who makes it is himself credible. Grant the infallibility or inspiration of a certain document, and any other document which is therein claimed to be infallible immediately becomes so. But a piece of writing which is human or fallible cannot confer greater authority than it possesses itself.

Let us continue our examination. Has it occurred to the reader how strange, yet ridiculous it is, on this theory, to have four accounts of the life of Christ, where one would have sufficed? How odd for the Holy Spirit thus to go over the same ground again and again, and repeat the same events in words that are almost identical! On the theory of divine inspiration such a procedure is baffling. But on the theory of human authorship it is comprehensible. We might imagine, for example, that there were various accounts of the life of Christ; (and we know that there were more than the four at present included in the Bible); then, when it came to choosing the one which was

authentic, it was found that there were several of such equal value that a choice was impossible, and they were all included.

Again, think of the epistles of Paul, with their reiteration of personal details. Is it likely that the Holy Spirit stood behind Paul, and dictated all these intimate greetings? And is it credible that this same Spirit put together such a chaotic presentation of facts as the book of Jeremiah? A poor commentary, indeed, on the literary ability of the Lord!

But there is one book which really gives us a clew as to its method of composition. It is the gospel according to Luke, which opens with the following words: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed."

Four things are brought to light by these words. In the first place, we learn that the occurrences which form the subject-matter of the gospel were communicated orally (*i. e.,* through tradition) by those who had been eyewitnesses. Secondly, there were many who committed the things so communicated to writing, and of these the author of Luke was one. What were his motives in doing so? "It seemed good" to him, in order that Theophilus might know the certainty concerning the things wherein he was instructed.

(How different from the divine prompting which we might expect!) And what was his method of gathering the facts about which he was writing? He "traced the course of all things accurately from the first." Evidently a thoroughly human procedure, in every particular, without the least evidence of supernatural prompting or help. Especially significant is the following juxtaposition of words: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative . . . it seemed good to me also" to do so. With this statement the writer puts himself into a class with the "many." But "many" includes a considerable number,—certainly more than three. According to the canon, however, there are only three other gospels which are inspired. So that there must have been some among the "many" writers who were uninspired, and if the writer puts himself into their class, he also may be considered uninspired. But if we conclude that there were more than three inspired individuals constituting the "many," we must likewise conclude that the Lord, having first illuminated the additional ones, later allowed their works to be lost,—a bizarre hypothesis. All in all, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the gospel of Luke arose in a normally human way. And since the Acts were written by the same person, we may attribute a similar origin to them.

Delightfully human is the following passage: "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul . . . wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles . . . wherein are some things hard to be understood." II Pet. iii, 15, 16. Now, either the things mentioned are hard to

be understood absolutely, in which case the Lord (writing through Peter) would have difficulty in understanding his own words (writing through Paul); or they are hard to be understood only by mankind, though clear to the Lord. In this case, however, we find ourselves in the following dilemma: either the Lord could not express himself clearly, or else he did not wish to. The former supposition is hardly tenable, as many of the Lord's creatures (*e. g.,* Voltaire, Renan, Mill) have succeeded in accomplishing this not over-difficult task. But the other supposition is almost equally out of the question. For the purpose of the epistles, one would think, was to bring home the truths which animated their author. To do this, however, the author would hardly choose the method of intentional obscurity.

Further light is shed on the subject under consideration by the history of the Biblical writings. We are so accustomed to speak of "The Bible,"—so used to seeing the sections known as "Genesis," "Exodus" and the like under a single cover,—that we are prone to imagine it must always have been thus, the "chapters" hanging together like those of a novel or theoretical treatise. They were the necessary elements of a single indivisible whole. History, however, has a different story to tell. The writings which constitute the Bible were composed at widely different intervals. And they were not stamped from the first and indubitably as components of a single work, but were gradually picked out from many similar writings. Notably it was the Synods at the close of the fourth century which gave the final stamp of approval to the form of the New Testament as we know it. Previous

to this time there were many differences of opinion as to the exact list of books which should be considered authentic. Some authorities favored certain books which were later omitted, others rejected books which were later included. So that, if we are to regard the New Testament as containing nothing but inspired truth, we must attribute inspiration and infallibility likewise to the men who pieced it together. A fantastic supposition, and one that is totally unacceptable especially by Protestants, who do not admit human authority alongside of the Bible. But even if we are to adopt this position, it will not remove our difficulties. For if the Holy Spirit guided mankind toward the choice of what was genuine, it guided Catholics and Protestants differently. There are certain writings in the Old Testament, known as the Apocrypha, which are accepted by the former, while they are rejected by the latter. So that we not only have no evidence as to the inspiration of the Biblical writings, but we do not even know what those writings really are. And this uncertainty with reference to the Apocrypha throws its shadow likewise over the books about which there is less dispute. How can we be sure, indeed, that nothing spurious has crept into these, when we find this fundamental disagreement regarding so substantial a portion of the Old Testament?

In addition to all these positive evidences of the human origin of Holy Writ, we have the negative indication afforded by the fact that none of the writers, with the exceptions noted above, have spoken of any supernatural help in the preparation of their work. We find great eagerness to tell of miraculous occur-

rences in general, but hardly a word concerning any miracle by which the composition of the works in question was effected. The voice of the Lord is often heard in thunder and dreams, but seldom dictates a word of Holy Writ. Does any one suppose for a moment that if there had been anything in the slightest degree unusual in the preparation of these books, the same would not have been heralded with loud voice as the direct work of the Lord? The fact, therefore, that nothing is proclaimed is the strongest possible proof that there was, in fact, nothing to proclaim.

So then, having shown that there is no definite and unmistakable claim in the Bible itself, as to its inspiration from above, and that there are many circumstances which speak against such inspiration, we shall add a few considerations which make the supposition in question well-nigh impossible. These are based on the contradictions in the Bible. If a work of literature purports to have been divinely inspired, we can reasonably expect it to tell us the truth and not contradict itself perpetually. God speaking through Peter will surely not say something different from God speaking through Paul. But contradictions abound from beginning to end. It would take us too long to elucidate this in detail, and so a few examples must suffice. In Mark we have Peter denying the Lord three times before the cock crows twice, in Matthew and Luke he does so before the cock crows once. In Mark Jesus tells his disciples to "take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no bread, no wallet, no money";[1] in Luke, on the contrary, he adjures them to take

[1] Mark VI. 8.

nothing at all, "neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money." [1]

True, these are mere details; a circumstance, however, which does not affect the essence of the matter. The Creator can reasonably be expected to know about details as well as essentials. And we can reasonably expect him to remember, in dictating to his stenographers, and not give us different accounts of the same events.

But there are contradictions likewise in regard to essentials. Witness the radically different accounts of Creation, in the first and second chapters of Genesis; [2] and the genealogies of Christ in Matthew and Luke, in which not only the names of Christ's ancestors but likewise the numbers of the generations disagree. (In Matthew there are twenty-eight generations between David and Christ, in Luke there are forty-three.) Then again, could there be anything more vitally important in Holy Writ than to give us information regarding the method of obtaining salvation? And would it not seem as if on this point, at least, the Holy Ghost would take pains to be explicit and clear? Yet in Mark salvation is made to depend on baptism and faith—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" [3] —while in Matthew it is made to depend entirely on works—"I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was

[1] Luke IX. 3.

[2] It is but fair to say that in the German translation by Luther the two accounts seem to show no marked contradiction; but in the American Standard Version the discrepancy is pronounced.

[3] Mark XVI. 16.

thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." [1] Surely a vital contradiction. And if the two passages are nevertheless held to be the work of one Spirit, the purpose of that Spirit, so far as we can see, was not to enlighten but rather mystify mankind.

We shall now pass to a more general examination of the Book, in order to form a direct judgment of its truth and value. There can be no doubt as to our verdict. The Biblical account is so full of absurdities and so antagonistic to truths which have been established by science, that it is out of the question, even for a moment, to consider it as a serious account of reality.

Do we really believe that Eve was made from Adam's rib? Do we believe that a woman was turned into a pillar of salt? Or that an ass spoke, or a man was carried for days in a whale's belly and then spat forth again alive? What should we say if a person were to tell us that he could change water into wine, or feed five thousand people with two fishes and five loaves of bread? We smile when we read about Jupiter begetting children with the daughters of men, but gravely proclaim that the Holy Spirit entered the Virgin Mary and brought forth the Son of God! We ridicule the materialization stories of modern spiritualists, but doubt not that Jesus arose from the dead and bodily flew toward heaven! The identical things that we reject elsewhere, we accept without a murmur

[1] Matt. XXV. 35, 36.

when they are vouched for by a man with a black coat buttoned up to his chin.

Nor is it necessary to go into lengthy disquisitions on the philosophy of miracles, and talk learnedly on hidden laws of nature and the wonder and mystery of the most ordinary happenings. If a thing is to be referred to a hidden law of nature, it ceases to be a miracle in the proper sense of the word, and merely bespeaks greater knowledge on the part of him who performs it, but not supernatural power. The essence of a miracle lies in the fact that it runs counter to the laws of nature, and thus furnishes evidence of a power which is superior to those laws. All that is required in considering these things is common sense. It is common sense which makes us doubt the stories of the Indian fakirs and brush aside the oracles of Delphi; common sense, likewise, which leads the Protestants among us to reject the miracles attributed to Catholic saints. Why not apply the same faculty when we are told that human beings once attained the age of nine hundred years, or that the sun stood still for an entire day? It is the reliance on hearsay and tradition, mentioned above, which fetters us in dealing with the absurdities of our own religion, and causes us to accept so much that we should otherwise deny. Once realize how irrational and unreliable that authority is, and our fetters drop away: we are able then to see things in their true light, and escape from the unworthy position of accepting myths for reality.

We pass to the collisions with the established facts of science. These are absolutely fatal to the claim of the book as a record of truth. To begin with the

story of creation, we have the earth and celestial luminaries created in six days,—an absurdity when viewed in connection with the revelations of geology. True, we are told in rebuttal that the days here referred to are not to be construed as periods of twenty-four hours, but of thousands or millions of years. A peculiar hypothesis, in view of the repeated declaration that "there was evening and there was morning, one day, (a second day, etc.)"; peculiar, likewise, when we remember that the Sabbath—a day of twenty-four hours—was set aside by the Jews as a period of rest, in commemoration of the day on which the Lord rested. If the days of creation are to be conceived in this lengthened form, then the passage from Ex. xx. 9–11, —"Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work . . . for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth," —contains two radically different meanings of the same word. Surely a very unusual proceeding, to say the least, for a writer thus to pass from one meaning of a word to another, without the least hint of the transition.

But even if we accept this explanation, we are not helped thereby, and new difficulties are added to the old. For example, there is the fact that vegetation was created on the third day, while the sun did not appear until the fourth. That is, trees and herbs—which thrive only with the help of sunlight—existed for millions of years without that help. To be sure, this difficulty might not have troubled the old chronicler, for according to him light was made and "divided from darkness" before the existence of the sun and stars! A naïve conception! Equally out of harmony

with the facts of science is the order in which living beings are brought forth. Not only is it untrue, according to geology, that there was a separate period for every kind of life—one for plants, one for birds and fishes, and another for land animals—but the sequence in which these are introduced is at variance with that established by paleontology. Notably, birds did not come before land animals, as Scripture would have it, and some fishes, *e. g.*, whales, came after the same.

The Copernican theory of the universe, while not explicitly contradicted by Genesis, is certainly denied by implication. The whole account of creation proceeds on the supposition that the earth is the primary body, while the sun and stars are secondary. In the first place, we have the earth existing before the sun, —an impossible situation under any conception which is based on the Copernican theory, even without the conclusions of the nebular hypothesis. The secondary position given the stars is indicated by the words: "he made the stars *also*." And finally we are told that God set the heavenly bodies in the firmament "to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night." That is, London and Paris were created for the sake of some little ant-hill far off in Australia!

Man has existed, according to the Holy Scriptures, only about 6000 years. This, too, is at variance with the facts of science, as is the fantastic supposition that the earth was covered with a deluge and all species of terrestrial life were preserved in a boat! According to the Bible Adam was the first man and he was created by a divine fiat; according to evolution there

was no Adam at all, and man developed by gradual stages from the lower animals.

These are a few of the scientific impossibilities which swarm in the Book. The attempt has been made to weaken their force by asserting that the first part of Genesis is not to be taken literally, but mythologically. A flimsy device; for if a whole section of Holy Writ may thus be discredited, what assurance have we that the other sections are not similarly unreliable? Then, too, the occurrences here related are referred to as facts in later sections of the Book, so that the infection of unreliability spreads likewise to them. Nor is the weakness of these first chapters confined to the cosmological happenings which they describe,—happenings which might be asserted to have no essential bearing on the Bible's spiritual message,—but extends into the very vitals of the religion. Christian theology depends for its very life on the conception of the fall of man. Man was created perfect; but he fell, and in so doing exposed the whole race to perdition. And to save the race, Christ came and made his sacrifice. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." I Cor. xv. 22. In opposition to this view, evolution teaches that there was no fall whatever. Instead of dropping from a higher estate, man has ever been climbing upward from a lower one. Hence the whole meaning and purpose of Christ's advent, as set forth in the religion to which he gave his name, is without foundation and collapses.

Seeing themselves thus hedged in by the inexorable reasonings of science, Christian apologists have again modified their defense, and while admitting errors in

regard to questions of fact, have maintained the uniqueness and truth of the Holy Book with reference to its ethical and religious teachings. But once more their stand is untenable. How draw a line of demarcation between that which is ethical and scientific? The two are so constantly intermingled in the Scriptures that the endeavor to separate them would result in a veritable crazy quilt of truth and error. Even the same passages may be ethical as well as scientific in content, and must accordingly be considered as inspired in one respect, but not in another.[1] Again, what guarantee have we that a book which is full of flaws scientifically will not likewise be vulnerable ethically? If God is the author of this book, he ought to be as well informed concerning the cosmological matters which it contains as concerning the religious. But if human beings were the authors, it does not seem likely that they will be more infallible with reference to the principles of morality than with reference to those of mechanics. The main support of this position, we suspect, rests in the fact that ethical statements are not so easily refuted as physical. But as a matter of fact, there are many doctrines taught in the

[1] Such is the injunction referred to later in the text, against the union of a man with his brother's wife. Primarily this is an ethical injunction, directed against incest. But the question whether the union in question is really harmful and incestuous, is scientific. It is a question of fact and experience, and as such is inextricably bound up with the ethical aspect of the matter. A union which tends to bring about degeneration in the offspring is doubtless reprehensible; but only observation and science can tell us which unions are dangerous in this sense. Insufficient knowledge regarding the matter led to prohibitions,—like that mentioned,—which are wholly uncalled for, while precarious relations, *e.g.*, between cousins, were tolerated.

Book, with reference to conduct and morality, which the enlightened judgment of today emphatically rejects. Polygamy and incest are tacitly sanctioned in the Old Testament, through their uncensured attribution to righteous individuals. And when incest is later condemned, we find the law flying to the other extreme, and forbidding relationships (*e. g.,* between a man and his brother's wife), which are perfectly harmless. Human sacrifice is offered in the case of Jephthah, and it is notorious how devilishly cruel was the warfare of the Jews, under the guidance of their Lord.

It may be interposed, to be sure, that these acts, while obnoxious to our moral sense today, were not so objectionable at the time they were committed, but in harmony with the standards of the age. We do not presume to judge as to the reasonableness of this contention. But once adopt the principle, and it threatens to sap all the ethical value out of the Scriptures. Without exception, these writings were composed ages ago, and we can never be sure, accordingly, whether the moral injunctions which they contain were meant only for the people to whom they were addressed, or are still supposed to be valid today. But of what use is moral guidance if it is not applicable to the conditions wherein we live? We are not interested in the Bible as a source of antiquarian information, but need it as a help in our actual perplexities. Even the precepts of the Saviour, more universally revered than the rules of the Old Testament, are subject to the same uncertainty of meaning. Such are the admonitions to love our enemies and turn the other cheek. How-

ever glibly our tongues may profess assent to these things, our actions belie them, and prove that we repose no confidence whatever in the words of the Master. But if such a cornerstone of Christian teaching is so universally disregarded, even by those who proclaim it as a cornerstone, how can we uphold the ethical infallibility of the Bible any more than the scientific?

Our conclusion must therefore be, that the Bible is a thoroughly human book. The religion which is built on it as a foundation has no claims to supernatural authority, either in regard to its physical, historical or religious teachings. Undoubtedly there is much that is good and true in these teachings. And we are at liberty to accept this, and adjure others to follow our example. But they are under no obligation to obey our exhortations, as we have no authority to make them. It is all a matter of inclination and choice. Perhaps, as Matthew Arnold has insisted, the Bible is superior to all other religions in the quality of its ethical teaching; and perhaps, as Schopenhauer has declared, what is true in it is also to be found in Buddhism and Brahmanism. But however we may judge of the book and the creed which is reared on it, there is no difference in kind between it and other systems of belief: Christianity is at most a better guide to right living than its sister-creeds, but it is not a vehicle of divine truth in any special and unique sense. It is a product of human thought, and is to be judged by the same standards and tests which we apply to other products of human thought.

THE EMPIRICAL ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIANITY

THE EMPIRICAL ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIANITY

THE truth of Christianity, we hear it said, is established by its results. Christianity has produced the noblest fruits of culture. Mohammedanism means polygamy; Buddhism goes with a stagnant civilization; the Christian religion alone spells progress and humanity.

It would be difficult to find an argument more replete with fallacies. To begin with, what is the warrant for asserting that a belief which produces good results must also be true? So far as the limited experience of individuals goes, such a thesis is certainly not borne out by the facts. It might be most advantageous for a mother to believe that her child had not died, but the beneficent effect does not alter the sad circumstance of its death. Whether the situation is different when we substitute humanity and its beliefs for the mother, is a hypothesis which has not been proven.

But even though we pass by this aspect of the matter, and accept the initial presupposition on which the argument is based, we are immediately met with a fallacy which is fatal. It is the fallacy technically designated as *post hoc ergo propter hoc*—if a thing follows another it is caused by that other. It is a fallacy familiar in the controversies which formerly raged

about the tariff question. America with its protective system, it was argued, is wealthy and pays high wages; England with free trade is poverty stricken and pays scant wages: hence a protective tariff is favorable to wealth and high wages. Needless to point out that the prosperity of our country does not flow from legal enactments, but depends on its boundless natural resources. As well might one argue that macaroni were conducive to noble painting, or beer to high philosophical thinking; for the Italians are fond of the vermiform article of diet, while the countrymen of Kant and Hegel are addicted to the amber beverage.

Approaching the subject more closely, we find that modern European civilization is the product of four factors:—

1. Christianity;
2. The Teutonic Spirit;
3. Græco-Roman Influence, through
   a. the medium of ancient Rome;
   b. the Renaissance;
4. Modern Free Thought.

Evidently it is premature to ascribe to one of these factors what was produced by the coöperation of all four. Furthermore, historical analysis proves fatal to the exalted claims of Christianity. If we would look for the peculiar results of this religion we must turn to the Middle Ages. To be sure, the influence of the Germanic spirit and of ancient civilization was not absent; but Christianity may be considered to have been paramount. What do we find? The Middle Ages gave us a devout religious spirit; they gave us charity and chivalry, and reared aloft the magnificent

cathedrals of Gothicism: but they also gave us religious intolerance; they fostered narrowness of mind, scientific ignorance, torture, filth, and disease. The general estimate of this period is significantly summed up in the designation: The Dark Ages.

With the Renaissance light began to dawn. Inventions aroused the world, imagination peered beyond the seas, science blossomed, art produced masterpieces, life was enriched in every direction. The movement was continued under the dominion of modern free thought. Opposed to the Dark Ages of mediæval Christianity, we now have the atheistic century of enlightenment. The individual begins to assert himself, tyranny and despotism say their prayers. Attention, diverted from the hopes and fears of an after life, devotes itself to the amelioration of present conditions. And the movement is not independent of the change in thought, but actually seems to rest upon it. The very leaders among men, those from whom the betterment flows, are the ones who renounce allegiance to the old faiths. Indeed, it is perhaps not exaggerated to say that scarcely one out of ten among the great thinkers of modern times has remained faithful to traditional orthodoxy.

The superior civilization of the Occident is thus by no means to be ascribed to Christianity alone. But is it really a superior civilization? Doubts arise with the very putting of the question. Were the Greeks our inferiors in culture? Have we surpassed them in harmony of thought and emotion? Their excellence, to be sure, depended on the slavery of countless numbers; but if this involved a "quantitative" deficiency,

it is questionable whether we are "qualitatively" their equals.

And how about the Jews? If there is one race which conveys the impression of miraculous guidance and divinely fore-ordained destiny, it is that of the handful of people from Palestine. Beset with enemies and dangers on every hand, hounded by those who merely saw in them the executioners of the Son of God, persecuted by fire and sword, they have nevertheless cut their way through the ages, until at present they stand facing the future on a par with every other nation, their compeers in every branch of endeavor. In philosophy they have given us Spinoza, in poetry Heine, in diplomacy they boast of Disraeli, in music of Mendelssohn; while in finance they are the leaders of mankind, proprietors of half the world, the fear and menace of all plodding Gentiles. Are we justified, however, in concluding herefrom that the Jewish religion is the veritable depositary of Divine truth?

Then there are the Japanese. Our superiors from the start in certain respects, they have shown a marvellous adaptability in appropriating the results of western civilization; they have exhibited a keenness and perseverance that are astonishing and that bid fair to land them among the foremost nations of tomorrow. To be sure, what they are borrowing comes from Christian hands; but they are bringing to it a native capacity which is equally important. The ignition of the match does not depend solely on the prepared surface against which it is rubbed, but likewise on the ingredients and properties of its tip. The Christian foundation, too, was ignited by contact with ancient

ideas, yet a Christian would be loath to attribute all the results of modern civilization to Pagan sources.

Of course, Japan as yet is largely a promise: its complete development seems to lie in the future. But this brings us to the heart of the matter. The argument which we are opposing is based on a narrow, momentary view of history. Grant that modern Christian civilization represents the acme of what has hitherto been achieved, grant that it outstrips the results of Greece, Japan, and the Jews,—does this prove that the present condition will prevail for all times, and that other periods and factors may not produce still finer results? The same reasoning three thousand years ago would have led to the conclusion that the Egyptian religion was the sole depositary of truth. Six centuries later truth would have migrated to Mt. Olympus; and later still, when Rome was acknowledged the ruler of land and sea, it would have established itself among the deities which were worshipped on the banks of the Tiber. Did the prosperity of the Mussulmans, during the eighth century of our era, justify an unswerving, unconditional belief in the Koran? Did the supremacy of Spain and the House of Hapsburg prove Catholicism to be right; and was this conviction shattered when Protestant nations began to take the lead? At present western Christianity seems to be materially triumphant: but will it always remain so? May not the world witness a shifting to Slavic, Greek church dominion; may not the "yellow peril" become a reality, ingulfing us in Buddhistic supremacy; may not countless newer and freer faiths follow in our wake, guiding humanity toward higher

achievements? We are merely inhabiting a narrow historical belt: not until the last trump has been played, not until every precinct has cast its vote and the complete returns are in, can we really determine which faith has been most efficacious in successfully directing the efforts of man.

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD?

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD?

THE sharp line of demarcation which was formerly drawn between believers and non-believers has been growing dim and vague; people are becoming more tolerant in religious matters and are beginning to realize the arbitrary nature of many of the older judgments. The Mussulman and Buddhist are no longer considered outside the pale of genuine worth, and even the confessed atheist is occasionally awarded childhood in the kingdom of God.

This change is wholesome and leads us to anticipate an entire revolution in the estimate of man's worth. The distinction between good and bad, religious and irreligious persons must certainly be based on more essential factors than mere words or intellectual insights.

Doctrinal beliefs, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, have but little to do with a man's essential position toward the Infinite, and veritable religion may be shared by people with the most divergent conceptions of life. Let us attempt a proof. It would be admitted—yes, stoutly maintained—by most religious people that God constantly intervenes in human life. This is an article of faith which belongs to the very essence of religion, characterizing the crudest savage superstition as well as the highest conceptions of Christianity. Not only in the days of the old Israelites did God commune with his people, his influence is said to be

exerted even now,—from day to day, from hour to hour. As to the exact nature of the communion, to be sure, there is diversity of opinion. The evidences of Divine influence are by no means clear and incontrovertible; they are so indefinite, in fact, as to leave ample room for skepticism on the part of unbelievers and to subject the champions of intervention to constant taunts and jeers for their credulity. The days are gone by when the Creator conversed face to face with his people, and the Divine influence must be sought in more subtle and elusive regions. Today we look to the moral law, the admonitions of conscience, deep intuitions of truth, visions of beauty, ideals of conduct, upwellings of strength, and the like, as the more especial manifestations of the Godhead, the point of contact between the human and the Divine. Whatever the individual differences of opinion as to the exact nature of the contact may be, it is agreed that in some such ways the Infinite comes into touch with man, and that in these aspects of life man communes more closely with the overarching spiritual world.

These aspects, then, may be regarded as the hither side of the Deity,—his manifestations in the realm of human existence, his earthly and finite appearance. Whatever God may be over and above this, within the realm of experience he comes to view as the moral law, beauty, aspiration, subconscious prompting, and so forth. His transmundane attributes may be infinite in number, and may surpass our most exalted ideas concerning them. With these, however, we have nothing to do: we are confined to the manifestations of the

Divine energy which come within our ken, and for us the essence of the Godhead is herewith exhausted.

An evident corollary of this proposition is the conclusion that obedience and disobedience to God depend upon our attitude toward these His earthly manifestations. They are the veritable believers who listen to the voice of God as it is embodied in the promptings of duty, the leadings of the ideal, the whisperings of the inner genius, and those other aspects of experience through which the Eternal speaks to humanity. It matters little whether or not they are consciously aware that it is the Godhead with whom they are dealing: the important thing is the adaptation and obedience. If it pleases God to disguise himself as beauty and morality, he will hold us accountable only for our attitude toward these latter, without demanding a knowledge of his identity. Like Philemon and Baucis, we shall be rewarded for the direct value of our actions, even though we fail to recognize the hidden divinity with which we are dealing.

What though the atheist deny the reality of God? If he adopt a worthy attitude toward the manifestations of God, he is a worthy member of the Divine congregation. What though he confine his devotion to duty, truth, and the ideal? If he be faithful in his cult, he will truly have served the Eternal. The potentate sends forth his legates to do his bidding and execute his laws; and it matters little whether a subject is aware of the exact relation between the lieutenant and the ruler, if only he obey the commands. We also are the subjects of a mighty potentate, and duty,

truth, beauty, the Ideal, are the legates that are sent out for our guidance. Some of us recognize the vicarious nature of these agents, others regard them as the final sources of authority. But whatever may be our mental attitude, we must adapt ourselves to their commands. In the extent of our adaptation lies our kinship with the Divine, not in the intellectual recognition of a relation. Those, indeed, are the true children of God who do his will, not those who merely recognize that it is his will.[1]

[1] It might be asserted that prayer formed a unique avenue of approach to the Divinity, which was denied to unbelievers. Even so, this would only modify, not annul our conclusions. For the other media of approach would still be there, in addition. Besides, the objection would have force only against those who do not pray at all. For we can hardly believe that the efficacy of prayer is confined to any religion or creed. The Buddhist who addresses his deity ought to be as close to the Godhead as the Christian. Hence prayer would not form a special bond of union for the Christian, but would be available to the adherents of other faiths as well.

THE GENESIS OF FAITH

THE GENESIS OF FAITH

IN looking over the mass of religious literature, we find but few attempts at a thorough psychological explanation of the genesis and development of faith. So-called proofs of God and immortality abound, to be sure, but they are not the commonest or even the best foundations for religious conviction. Their efficacy is frequently confined to the person of the promulgator. And even where they seem to generate belief, the real agents may lie deeper, hidden in the recesses of the heart. Indeed, the deepest faith probably does not support itself with the syllogistic crutches, but is borne aloft by the wings of feeling and intuition. Numberless persons can bear witness to a gradual and mysterious growth of belief, which ends in convictions as deep as those effected by the most rigorous mathematical demonstrations.

Numberless persons, indeed, yet not all. Many would be willing to foster such beliefs, but are prevented through logical obstacles. They may admit that they, like other human beings, live and act largely by faith, that they are surrounded by it as by the air they breathe, that their most important actions are based on it, and that it would be folly to be guided solely by the mandates of reason. Yet they insist that faith in one thing does not necessarily demand, or even justify, faith in another. If one believes in

a possible unification of knowledge, one need not for that reason believe in an existence after death. Trust in the future advancement of human society does not imply assurance of the reality of sirens and sphinxes. "Faith," they say, "may be a valid ground for assurance, but what we shall have faith in is by no means settled by this general statement. In addition to the truth of the general statement, we need an individual impulsion *toward faith in a certain thing*. Other people may have revelations in regard to divine matters; but such revelations possess no claim on us, and before we too go through similar experiences, we shall persist in the denial of that which they affirm."

In order to dispel the mystery which for such persons must surround this subject, and possibly to help assurance in their souls, it might be well to throw some light on the elusiveness of the development of faith, and enumerate some of the preëxisting elements out of which it is born and the circumstances attending its growth. Until this is done, religious belief must always have an air of strangeness and untrustworthiness. It will be put into a different category from the convictions which they share with other people, and, on account of its non-universality, will ever be regarded with a degree of suspicion.

It must be admitted, as indicated above, that information concerning these points is not ample. So subtle a thing is religious conviction that not only is it impossible to transmit it bodily, like a demonstration, from one to another, but even the nature of its development is difficult to note. Among the reasons for this lack of information we may mention the ob-

scureness attending intuitions in general, and the special obscureness of religious intuitions, arising from the elusiveness of the data on which they are based. Intuitions are often the product of various factors which exist in the mind simultaneously, but which are too weak for separate notice. In my summer street-car rides I sometimes pass the home of a friend which is situated in a remote part of the city. When at some distance I have a vague feeling that I am soon to pass the place; but this feeling is not based on definite perceptions, for I should be utterly unable to describe any of the neighboring buildings. The various elements which give rise to the presentiment exist in the mind without gaining conscious prominence. The general impression which they create being associated with my friend's home, I naturally conclude, when I receive this impression, that I am near the place.

A still more elementary example is the following: Having offered a dollar for ten cents' worth of groceries, I received the change in the form of six smaller coins. A glance satisfied me that I had been given the right amount, although I had not had time to count the pieces. Each piece seemed to send a separate ray to the eye, which then traveled on to the brain; and the united effect of all these subtle sensations was a feeling of "all-rightness." In this case I had caught the elements of the intuition on the wing; but they were few, and of a clear and tangible nature. Far different is it with the elements of religious intuitions. These are among our deepest and most elusive experiences. Indeed, it is a notable fact that some of the most important contents of consciousness are at the same time

among the vaguest. Witness the inspiration imparted by thoughts of some noble man whom we wish to imitate or some admired woman whose approbation we covet. So indefinite are these thoughts that they scarcely admit of being stated: half intellectual, half emotional, they exist as a merest "fringe" in the mind; yet they have a power over us that is extremely stimulating. Witness also the faith in the unity and order of the universe which animates the student, and which has resulted in the scientific achievements of the last four centuries. In spite of the importance of this postulate, how few there are who clearly recognize its existence! A man must go through all sorts of manœuvres with salts and acids and seeds and bones, must explore the heavens, excavate mountains, and translate half of ancient literature before he recognizes the powerful undercurrent which is bearing him on. Such are the feelings on which religious intuitions are based. In fact, this very belief in the order of the universe is capable of expanding into a belief in God and immortality, as will be shown later.

Now, if intuitions in general are so subtle, even when they deal with simple things, how perplexing must be the intuitions based on elements which in themselves challenge observation! Yet they may not altogether surpass human understanding. If the intuition connected with the coins was within reach of analysis, there is no reason why deeper ones should be quite beyond its domain. With more acuteness and patience of observation we might be able at least to indicate their rough outlines, and so suggest the desired explanation. I have myself passed from a materialistic

state into an attitude of faith, and have retained a few salient points of my experience, which will enable me to give a slight scheme or synopsis of the passage from doubt to affirmation. Though my own experience may not apply to everybody, I am satisfied that it is typical of a great number of cases.

Every one probably has a sense of the meaning and value of life; every one believes that it potentially contains a supreme good, and that he may attain it by the proper endeavors. The nature of the good of course varies enormously in different individuals; but its attainment would in every case produce a sense of satisfaction and contentment. The main thing to be observed about the feeling is, that it exists as a postulate or *a priori* conviction, independent of rational foundation, and that it exerts as powerful an influence as the most rigorously proved mathematical proposition.

If, now, any line of procedure calculated to bring about our end proves in vain, there is, to be sure, a certain disappointment; this, however, does not shake our inborn conviction of the possibility of success. What we do is simply to change the direction of pursuit. We give up the former aims and set up new ones in their stead; and if the latter prove equally vain, we repeat the procedure. But evidently there must be a limit to this operation. The world is large and the ends to be striven after are many, but they are not infinite; and a time may arrive when the conclusion is forced upon us that the desired satisfaction cannot be found. This will happen especially to men of large powers of generalization. To such it will not be necessary to strive after all the possible individ-

ual ends. Being disappointed in one pursuit, they immediately generalize to the genus of which it was a species, and thereupon give up the entire genus forever. Thus they may soon arrive at the end of all human endeavor, and life gains an aspect of vanity.

But what of the deep inner conviction with which they started? That had its origin previous to any struggles and disappointments, and might well be found to outlive them,—as, indeed, is usually the case. When the sense of value is strong, it asserts itself in spite of all failures, and it does so by *postulating another life for its satisfaction.* Perhaps it always does so; perhaps the earthly ideals are not yet exhausted in the apparently exceptional cases, the good being sought, for example, in reason and the beauty of system, or in the delights of cynicism and opposition to all theories of reconciliation. But cut off all possibility of a fulfillment of desires in this life, and the chances are that another existence will be postulated.

Faith in immortality springing up in these ways, is thus nothing but a continuation of original convictions and impulses. Generally, of course, it is supported by certain outside considerations,—such as the antecedent possibility of a deeper world, based on the narrowness of our experience and the unquestioned reality of many aspects of nature beyond those which are familiar; and such as the various considerations tending directly to prove the existence of a deity. These, however, are mere external aids, of service rather in the fixation and defense than in the attainment of belief. Substantially belief is present already in our sense of value. Value exists, we say: but since

it does not exist in human life, it must exist in human life, extended. It is a sort of ground-tone or pedal point, which persists in spite of all external obstacles, and which leads to an assurance of immortality much as the tone C, in the third movement of Beethoven's fifth symphony, leads through a succession of the strangest harmonies into the triumphant finale.

This, then, is one of the ways in which faith arises. It is the type which probably underlies the class of convictions arising from ideals, struggles, disappointments, and sorrows. Another method, representing a sub-class of the one just described, is exemplified in persons of a philosophic or scientific turn of mind. Such a person enters the life of thought with a profound conviction of the order and plan underlying the universe, and with a belief in the possible comprehension of the same by human consciousness (and possibly by his own). Here, too, the faith is wholly irrational; it is interfused with the blood and requires no syllogisms to give it credit. It inspires the young scientist with enthusiasm, and incites him to devote a lifetime to its verification. He works arduously, but soon finds the field expanding on every side: the horizon recedes as fast as it is approached, until he realizes that in the very nature of the case he will never be able to reach it. The universe turns out to be infinitely richer than he suspected, and reluctantly he admits man's inability to fathom its depths. But the deep inner convictions with which he started still echo through his soul. The world *is* rational, and *is* reducible to laws. Accustomed to believe in the possible unification of knowledge, he finds it impossible to

relinquish this faith, and he postulates an enlargement of existence, in which the nature of the universe may be more intelligible. His religious belief is merely an extension of his scientific belief, and we have a case where science and religion are not opposed, but where the one rather prepares for and leads into the other.

Presented thus in meagre outline, the genesis of faith appears slim enough, and it will not be surprising if nobody finds ground in it for personal conviction. But the bare statement that there is value in life, or plan in the universe, which expresses the mental attitude of every one, is also pitiably uneloquent; whereas the truth of this statement, when felt, is infinitely rich and stimulating. Were we able to depict all the emotional stirrings which accompany the procedure indicated,—all the struggles and hopes, disappointments and victories,—we should certainly win assent from many readers, carrying them along with us as we swung around the final curve.

In order to give a closer idea of the nature of these experiences and of the peculiar intermixture of emotion and reasoning characteristic of them, I subjoin a fragmentary account of my own passage from doubt to affirmation, which I was able to retain, like a feather from an escaping bird, and which, transformed into impersonal guise, I would entitle:

The Value of Existence

When life is young and immediate pleasures and aims still glorify the horizon of the mind, the ques-

tion of immortality seldom surges up with any urgent appeal for an answer. But the years roll on and the mind becomes accustomed to sacrifice present enjoyment for future gain. Aims expand and ends recede; at times, indeed, they are projected to the very threshold of the grave. When finally realized, however, they are found to be divested of all their primitive charm and halo. Man then wonders why it was that they attracted him so powerfully. "What is the meaning of it all?" he asks, "are all my dreams of happiness and betterment merely the empty products of a heated imagination? Am I the dupe of some dark power, conscious or unconscious, which amuses itself by luring me on after unsubstantial phantoms?"

Materialism, indeed, would have me believe that it is thus. Man, it teaches, is nothing but a dusty concourse of atoms, governed by the same simple, mechanical laws as the clod of earth on which he treads. He differs from it only as an elaborate scale differs from a shopkeeper's balance: in complexity. Once master the elementary laws of material nature, and procure instruments delicate enough to follow them in the workings of the brain, and the deeds of man will become as clear as the operation of a pulley. It will then be possible to reduce to mechanical formulæ the emotion of sublimity called forth by King Lear, and the sense of calm and holiness which takes possession of us when we have done our duty. Apart from their immediate pleasantness and their effect on our material well-being, all feelings and emotions will be put on exactly the same level. They are the conscious concomitants of physiological processes, and nothing more,

They have no mysterious significance, point to no deeper reality. They are mere tricks of nature, whose blind object is the survival of the beast,—man. In general, consciousness is but a secondary concern, but the accompaniment of a certain complexity of matter in motion. Before this happened to exist there was no feeling, and after it ceases to exist there will again be none. All life on the globe is destined to vanish, and with it all ideals which have been cherished by humanity. Perhaps, in the millions of eras following this catastrophe, there will never be the least gleam or scintillation of thought, never the least reflection of the great world-process going on around us. Nothing will remain but the eternal atoms, grinding their eternal way through the eternal space.

This is the desolate, God-forsaken view of the universe which is turned out in our factories of science. But the trouble with this theory is similar to that with the children of old Saturn. Just as these latter were devoured by the parent who instilled life into them, so our theory is swallowed up and disintegrated by the very influences which gave birth to it. For observe, this doctrine which, when carried to its legitimate conclusion, ends by denying all higher value to life; which reduces beauty to a mere chance collocation of matter in motion, ethical ideals to mere illusions, and consciousness in general to something secondary and sporadic,—this doctrine itself presupposes the existence of ideals, of things which possess a deep inner worth. For what is it that drives men to investigation and the framing of hypotheses? It is Value, deep Value, which tacitly underlies all our thoughts

and actions, which is deeper even than Truth and Virtue, which gives significance to all things and contains all, but is contained by none. We may seek it in health and wealth, in happiness and fame, in knowledge, or the progress of mankind; but always it is a sense of worth which beckons us on, a longing for that which will satisfy our deeper needs and a faith in its attainability. Of what avail are the objects about which the scientist reasons? Mere dead apparatus, they are cast aside when they have served their purpose. Of what avail is Truth? Count the grains of sand on the seashore, or diagram the outlines of a boulder, and you will have Truth indeed; but what of it? It gives us no thrill of discovery, helps us not toward a name, produces no unification of knowledge, affords us no glance into the infinite: it is without Value, hence away with it. All the world is meaningless and insipid until touched by the magic wand of Value, which alone transforms and glorifies it.

As life courses on, we change our ideals and estimates of worth. We fall in love, rear a family, found a state, strive after universal welfare. What was dear to us loses its flavor, and what tempted us not we eagerly pursue. The search for the laws of nature, once the central point of existence, now seems like the fruitless gathering of stones of similar color, like a vain pursuit of shadows. The political and social ideals which filled our youthful hearts with enthusiasm, afford us no more warmth than the logs in a painted fireplace. And yet, though disappointment and disillusion follow each other in quick succession, we ever again dive into the whirlpool of life, search-

ing for the balm which may quiet our unappeasable longing. Until finally, when the bandage drops from our eyes, when we have made the rounds of life without finding the desired satisfaction, there is but one course left open to us: to leap over the confines of earthly existence and embrace the infinite.

Here we learn the secret of that elevating, sanctifying power which care and sorrow often exert over us. Our earthly illusions may be dispelled, to be sure, but they prove to be the rent curtain which hid the radiance of reality. The eternal striving remains,—the everlasting want, which is the light of hope, the proof of God, the ladder of heaven.

Man's life is a sublime syllogism, the steps of which differ infinitely, but of which the grand conclusion remains ever the same. The major premise is a vague but irresistible sense of the worth of all living and striving. According to person and condition, this sentiment assumes a variety of aspects. To the youth it is the blushing maiden who promises an infinity of bliss; to the hero and worker it is fame that beckons him on with alluring pictures; to the mother it is the child on which her tenderest hopes are centered; and to the philanthropist it is the welfare of humanity which arouses him to tireless activity. But one by one these ideals fade and disappear. The maiden loves another, or the wine of her affection changes into the vinegar of ill temper. The glory of fame bursts like a soap-bubble, or reveals itself in the ugly shape of selfishness and vanity. The child dies, dragging into the grave all the hopes of its mother. And the wel-

fare of humanity, finally, becomes an enormous, sphinx-like riddle: what is it?

But amid these fluctuations there still abides that profound and unconquerable sense of the worth of all living and striving. Deeper than aught else, it subsists, even after all the fair stars of hope and promise have disappeared. At times it resembles some unfathomable abyss of night, some enormous spiritual chaos, or some mighty world-force that would glory in the exercise of its strength, but is doomed to waste it upon nothingness. It is then that all the devious paths of the syllogism of life converge into one bright focus; it is then that there rises upon the awful night of unsatisfied desire the glorious sun of immortality. Not in this world, but beyond, beneath, before, and above it, lie the meaning of strife and the realization of hope! Like a revelation does this assurance come to us. It need not be weighed and tested in the brazen scales of science, for it carries its certificate of truth on its own forehead. It leads to conviction, not with the plodding steps of the cart-horse of calculation, but with the unerring flight of Pegasus. And how it comforts, how it animates us! It insinuates itself into every thought and action, and casts a sweet radiance on our path. Like the first tinge of crimson on the early eastern sky, it is the harbinger of a glorious day that is soon to dawn.

GROUNDS OF FAITH

GROUNDS OF FAITH

AMONG the opinions that we hold, but few are the result of methodical demonstration. Even where reasoning is involved, it is usually not of primary importance. Our conclusion shines out before us; our will drives us toward it as with the hidden power of a propeller; and reason merely adds the specious strokes of the oar, which seemingly impel us onward. Yes, even when we are less biased, even when we feel ourselves ready to accept any conclusion that is logically correct, our emotional preferences will play a part and act as currents gently furthering or steadily hemming our progress towards the goal. There is something to be said in favor of every proposition; and our desires have accommodating perceptions, ready to sift out the arguments that are agreeable and marvellously impervious to the others. Apart from the emotional element, too, our reasonings are often most confused. Of syllogistic clearness and symmetry there is little trace. The most manifold considerations are thrown together, if only they possess the common feature of pointing in one direction; and these writhe and twist about in the greatest disorder, like gold-fish in a basin, until finally they are caught up in a sudden current of emotion and landed in the placid pool of the conclusion. The particular arguments, if followed up by themselves, might be in-

adequate, yet there is validity in the cry of the *ensemble*.

Of this nature are the arguments that nourish my belief in a greater consciousness than the human—encircling and controlling us—and in immortality. My faith in these matters was semi-emotional in origin, and as such it would likely persist, even without the support of a logical foundation. Nevertheless, as time has passed, certain considerations of a theoretical nature have presented themselves which impart plausibility to the views I entertain; and, such as they are, I shall attempt to reproduce them, though without excessive regard for nicety of arrangement or perfect accuracy of reasoning. I shall offer pictures of my mind as it appears when directed toward the problems in question, with the various arguments, subjudgments, and undercurrents of feeling juxtaposed in much of their original disorder; regarding the world from the ordinary point of view, but also inserting considerations of an idealistic nature; claiming no coerciveness for any isolated line of reasoning, though hoping for some plausibility from their combined effect.

I

Viewing the mind from the exterior, through the medium of the bodies which it inhabits, we perceive an outcrop. Here is the immeasurable universe, with its suns and stars, and its tiny little mite of an earth. Yet how majestic it is, this earth, with its Atlantics and Pacifics, its Amazons and Himalayas! In comparison, man is a mere bird on the mountain, an

excrescence, a parasite, a nothing. Is the fire of consciousness confined to these atoms; does the great cosmic process only find a reflection in this peculiar union of carbon and nitrogen; have the myriads of celestial bodies been whirling about for æons in order that a few dust-particles might finally be tickled?

When I see a fire-spitting volcano, I surmise the presence of subterranean heat. When I regard the strata jutting out of a mountainside, I postulate a continuation beneath the surface. The oceanic isle is the summit of a submarine elevation, an outcrop of land which everywhere underlies the sea. Shall it be different with this outgrowth which we call mind,—this brilliant appearance of thought, this illuminated island in the dark ocean of unconsciousness?

Man's body is embosomed in the elements: blooming forth from their womb, it is laid back into them as into a sepulchre. And with his body goes the growth and decline of his spirit. Must I believe, however, that the corporeal atoms have existed and shall continue to exist for all time, while their conscious glow is but a sporadic fact, but the scintillation of a will-o'-the-wisp? Must I accept the material law, *ex nihilo nihil fit,* while the realm of sensation witnesses creation without cause and existence without persistence?

All manifestations of energy are continuous and interconnected. Force produces force the wide universe throughout, and will continue to do so until time is no more. Is consciousness alone to be without its kinsmen? Are there only individual stones and single vibrations of thought, no planetary systems or mag-

netic poles? Are there no starlike brothers of feeling, no fatherly suns of devotion? Will gravitation, electricity, cohesion remain, and knowledge be crushed out of existence by the collision of a planet?

No, it cannot be! The conclusion is unavoidable that as man's body is part of material nature, so his mind is part of a greater mind. The analogy begun in the animal is the hint of a parallelism that extends deep into the realm of material being. The strata must dip beneath the surface; consciousness must follow the worm into the earth, must bubble along with the playful brook, swell with the ocean, revolve with the planet, and soar on to the very constellations.

And if the mind externally resembles an outcrop, it is a fragment from within. It is incomplete in every direction, and there are currents sweeping through and ragged edges hanging from it on every side. We clutch at a few insignificant facts and strive for some paltry ends, but the great systems of which these are members remain hidden from view. Our knowledge is an infinitesimal fraction of the unit of complete knowledge, a mere promontory in the vast ocean of the unknown. The streams of will course through us without summons or sanction, and lead to actions whose outcome we do not know. It seems as if we were led along preordained paths and guided by invisible powers; it seems, indeed, as if there were

> *". . . a divinity that shapes our ends,*
> *Rough-hew them how we will."*

In the enjoyment of beauty we gain glimpses of a richer life, hear echoes of a far-off, happy land of

promise. The reality of this land is also vouched for by our strivings after higher life and perfection, our "heavenly homesickness," our beginnings without end, our desires without satisfaction. In spite of the aimless, drifting aspect of existence, we cherish the conviction of its reality, of its meaning and rational purpose.

The inner and outer aspects of mind thus exactly correspond: from the exterior a recurring outcrop, from the interior a fragment; from without a studded ocean, from within a surrounded island. Viewed from every side, indeed, the mind suggests, not an entity complete in itself, but a part of a greater whole. Man's consciousness, like his body, belongs to a larger universe; there are solar systems of sensibility, matching the sublime constellations of material nature.

II

Now let us give a turn to the mental kaleidoscope and introduce a more sober, logical combination of elements. Consciousness is attributed to human beings and animals. Some people would even go further, and bring the flower and leaf within the realm of sensation. But in general the passive life of the plant appears too little like their own to foster such a view. As for rocks and minerals, water and air—they seem absolutely out of question. The earth, with its oceans, rivers, mountains, and clouds; the solar and sidereal systems, with their suns and planets, their comets and nebulæ—all are mere inert matter, except in so far as they may harbor organisms similar to those here.

In opposition to this view, we must first protest against the assumption that consciousness can only be inferred where its expression resembles that of man. We know nothing of the inner, essential connection between matter and mind, and lack every justification for assuming that sensibility cannot arise except under the conditions presented by animal tissue. It is doubtful whether the worm or louse, if able to philosophize, would ever come to the conclusion that man was a being endowed with sensibility. Indeed, it is unlikely that the lower animals should even be able to form an adequate conception of the bodies of their higher mates. The ant may regard the elephant as an amorphous, inanimate object—a mountain with destructive avalanches. The rhinoceros, if it is able to perceive the mosquito at all, may class it as a soulless shred of matter. On the other hand, the cat may put the rubber-ball into the family of rodents. It would be interesting to make classifications of the animal kingdom as it would appear to various species; doubtless it would undergo considerable modification, and *homo sapiens* might be missing in many of the systems.

May we too resemble the lower animals in our enumeration of living beings? Are we overlooking the sensibility connected with the flowing river and the coal measures, because we are unable to perceive the individualities to which they belong? The phenomena exhibited in the animal world assume degrees and qualities which do not surpass our powers of perception. No animal is too large to be seen in its entirety; and none moves so rapidly or curiously but that its

movements can likewise be perceived. All fall into the circle of perceptibility, all are subject to our mental control. From the position of many animals, however, this is not the case. The blind cave-fish, for instance, could never form an idea of a horse, or the oyster of a bird.

If this is true of the lower animals, may it not also be true of man? What ground have we for assuming that we occupy the top notch, and that there are no manifestations of life transcending our own mental control? May not the forces of heat, light, electricity, and sound be the bearers of sensibility in higher organisms, similar to the nerves that permeate our own bodies? May not the solid universe be an unimportant outgrowth of some vaster power, like the hair that covers our limbs? In view of the immense differences characterizing the material aspect of animals, differences so great as in some cases to denote inability of mutual perception, we are by no means justified in maintaining that consciousness can only exist with manifestations exhibiting a pronounced similarity to those of human beings or animals.

But even if we were to accept this position, assuming that sensibility must be accompanied by a resemblance to the human body, we should only require a resemblance in essentials. Nobody would hold that ten fingers, four limbs, a soft skin, or a spinal column were necessary, for life exists without these concomitants. What, then, are the essentials? We can arrive at an answer by abstracting from the human body all those features which are not absolutely necessary for a flourishing of conscious life. In the first

place, we could cut off the limbs, sexual organs, teeth, ears, and hair, without any essential impairment of mentality. And if the arts of surgery and histology were sufficiently developed, we might add the skin, ribs, muscles, special organs of sense, and even the vital parts. If the nervous system—which alone would remain—were treated artificially so as to receive the identical stimulations which it now receives from the neighboring organs, while the normal conditions of heat and protection from rough contact were observed, it would not be too fantastic to conceive of bundles of nerves hung up in physiological laboratories which went through all the emotional phases of normal people,—laughed at the latest jokes, became intoxicated with liquors, wept at misfortune, hoped for better days.[1] There is nothing intrinsically absurd about this notion. We know that sensation in the last resort inhabits the nerves and brain, and that all other organs merely furnish the conditions necessary for their functioning. If these could be furnished artificially, we might indeed have a realization of the fancy.

But have we now arrived at the end; may not the analysis be extended still further? We know that the nerves and brain themselves, as mere matter, do not

[1] Such a stationary nervous system would resemble an inverted plant, the brain standing for the root, the spinal column for the main stem, and the nerves emanating therefrom for the smaller branches. Indeed, all the nervous activities essential for the production of even the highest states of mind are smaller, to the eye, than the activities manifested by a tree with its leaves and stems slightly agitated. Lay bare the nervous system of a man enraptured by a glorious sunset, and less "life" will appear than is evident in a rosebush swayed by the wind.

suffice for the production of consciousness, but require a certain motion besides. May not the essential conditions of consciousness be connected somehow with this motion? And are we justified in declaring that the motion can only be found in a brain and nervous system, or, still more, in a brain and nervous system like the human?

We admitted, for the sake of argument, that we might deny the presence of consciousness where it was unaccompanied by manifestations similar to those in man; but we insisted that only essential manifestations were to be considered. If, now, the essential ones are reducible to subtle complications of motion, who can determine where to confirm the right kind of complications and where not? Who can prove that the heat emanating from a volcano is not part of a system more elaborate even than that in the brain of man? Who can arrange and classify the granite rock, the gushing brook, the tree, the oyster, man himself, the earth, and the solar system, according to their grade in the important motion? And who would deny the existence of invisible intelligences, when the very core of the material conditions governing our own intelligence is a phenomenon so elusive and physically insignificant? Shall we locate the essence of man in his outer garments, and be misled by the flappings of a scarecrow? Shall we overlook the meditating philosopher, while watching the "life" manifested in the clothes on the wash-line? Shall we recognize life in the rompings of the children, but deny its presence in the immovable face of the worshipping saint? No, and let this be our final word, embodying

the nucleus of these paragraphs of problematic material: not until you show us the fundamental, essential conditions of consciousness, and prove that these are confined to human beings and animals, shall we be prepared to consider whether the rest of the universe is dead and unfeeling. Even then there would be room for argument; but before so much has been done it is folly to be dogmatic.

III

How numerous are the considerations that suggest hidden, transcendent realms of being! Take the uncertain, fluctuating nature of some of our higher faculties. The senses give us photographs of the world; the understanding penetrates into this world as with telescope and prism. Both reveal what exists apart from us; both have their outer juxtapositions, corresponding to the relations within. But when we examine the world of morals and beauty, the case is different. Here, too, there are distinctions which seem to postulate exterior realities, but all search for the latter seems destined to remain fruitless. There is no constant material expression of our higher emotions, no external realization like that which corresponds to the faculties of sensation and understanding. Yet they feel as if they referred to an order of things independent of the individual. Shall this order be denied simply because it is hidden from the senses? May not the senses be incomplete, while the world which they reveal constitutes but a fragment of the total reality? To the senses the embrace of the sexes

is identically the same thing, whether performed in wedlock or in contravention of social usage; but what a difference in reality! It is universally conceded that the difference is far greater than that, for instance, between running a race and sitting in a chair—great as this may appear from the viewpoint of the senses. But shall the important differences of life be illusory—differences in air-castle material, in dream-substance—while the unimportant ones correspond to variations in outward, solid fact? Is the world of motives a shadow-world, while that of jumping and gesticulating is real?

The conclusion bears down upon us that the deeper things in life—meaning, poetry, love—ought also to find their expression apart from immediate consciousness. Acts prompted by the same motives, no matter how great their differences as mere facts of sense, ought to become manifest in some way as similar in nature; while those which are prompted by different motives ought to stand forth distinct, even though they are externally as similar as two eggs. The unnoticed and fruitless attempt to save a drowning man's life must somewhere have effects as great as the ostentatious endowment of institutions of learning.

All this may seem fantastic, but it serves to show how little we know of the universe, and how man may have affiliations which fail to be affected by death. There may be more dimensions to the world than we suspect; matter and force may have mysterious aspects of which we have never dreamed.

But, turning to this threatening pair, what have we to fear from matter and force; how dare they loom

up so authoritatively and threaten destruction to the spirit? May it not turn out that they themselves have no existence apart from mind? Might not a thorough development of the idealistic philosophy reveal the divinity of material nature, and lead to a conviction of immortality? But even if we adopt the common view, and regard matter as distinct from spirit, who can assert that consciousness is dependent upon it, who deny its capacity for independent existence? Is it not evident that mind runs alongside of matter, without ever dipping into it? Can a thing be held to produce another because it moves parallel with it? The bee sways to and fro with the flower, but it is not annihilated when the flower is plucked. The organist draws forth enchanting tones from his instrument, but the composition is not lost with the removal of the pipes. Matter is the garment of mind; it fits with marvellous accuracy, but it can readily be laid aside when the trumpeteer of eternity bids us don our heavenly robes.

IV

The theory of evolution has done much to weaken arguments from design; but it is doubtful whether it can explain the superb flowering of thought and emotion evident in the realms of beauty and truth. It may account for the agreement between the conduit of environment and the enclosed current of ordinary life, but when the stream suddenly leaps up in a symmetrical fountain, with jets spouting out toward the four points of the horizon, and forming accurate math-

ematical figures, our agreement is at an end, and higher explanations must be invoked.

Our cruder instincts and physiological adaptations may be compared with the current, moulded and directed by the environment; while our finer æsthetic and intellectual activities correspond to the fountain. Natural selection only accounts for those vital phenomena which have served in the preservation of the species. The subtler cognitive and emotional states are mere by-products. The lower is nurtured with solicitude, the higher serenely neglected.

By analogy we might expect the dust-particles on the floor to settle into Raphael Madonnas, or the shavings from a carpenter's bench to assume the form of exquisite little Chinese figures. We resemble the observer who sees stones cut and placed, and names the emerging cathedral a by-product.

Man's higher nature is a sublimation of that primitive life which is the direct result of natural selection. Instincts which were implanted in order to help in finding food and killing enemies are developed into wonderful mathematical and artistic faculties. We take the rude cudgel wielded by primitive man, and lo! it serves as a violin and telescope. Is not this double and unforeseen use a matter of significance? An object designed for high employments may of course be put to low ones: a book may be utilized as a weight, a watch as a missile. But when we buy a cane and find it responding to the manipulations of a flutist, there is reason for surprise; and we suspect that the flute was after all the main end in the manufacture of the cane.

V

Here, however, I must stop and ask an important question: Do the foregoing arguments really constitute the foundation of my belief; do they actually produce conviction? With this we are brought back to the considerations of the introduction. I do not know, at times, whether to answer *yes* or *no*. Truth must be quaffed when freshly poured out; allow it to stand and it soon becomes stale. Our insights and demonstrations may be valid enough when first perceived, but when after months they are finally relegated to paper, they often lack a vital element which they originally possessed. We may read them and discover no flagrant errors; yet they fail to take hold of us with their former electrifying power. Indeed, the more we search for the missing quality, the more it eludes us, until at last, if we continue, even the significance that still remained disappears, and all grows blank and vapid.

But we find, upon further consideration, that this is the property of all truth. Even the proposition that two and two make four becomes meaningless when we analyse it too minutely and try to whittle out its essence. Truth, like Beauty, can be gathered best while we are intellectually perambulating. Arrest the bucket over your head and the water falls out. Look too closely for the charm in the maiden's face and her features are transformed into mere lines and surfaces. Truth seems to filter in through the outlying portions of the mental eye: it does not strike us with a single

ray, but inundates us in a sea of light; it is the outcome or complement of mental states.

The state I was in when first I saw the truths of the foregoing pages—the matrix of feeling, presupposition, and subconsciousness—this was the animating, affirmative element, the foundation of my belief; and before I can impart this I cannot hope for coerciveness.

But coercion is not my object. Like persons in a conversation, I merely wish to express myself. Perchance some readers will find themselves in similar mental states. If so, they may be pleased to note the correspondence, and may gather from these lines what I was unable to put into them. One truth, however, may be repeated for all, namely, that our arguments are often but slightly influential in establishing belief. We may profess faith in them and regard them as the foundation of conviction, yet the real foundation lies deeper. Its premises extend into our innermost nature; they are not to be counted by the pair, but by the hundred and thousand; and the rules according to which they lead into the conclusion have not yet found their Aristotle.

THE EXTENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

THE EXTENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

THE smallest imaginable extent of consciousness would be that of the narrow solipsist, who confines sensibility to his personal mind. Practically this position has been held by no one, everybody believing in the conscious illumination at least of his fellows. And although the Cartesians denied the existence of lower grades of consciousness, most people would also place animals within the category of sensitive creatures, while some would even include plants. With respect to the upward extension of consciousness, on the other hand, there has been considerable doubt. The religious systems, to be sure, have taught the existence of higher and more powerful beings,—of angels, demons, and gods; but the truth of their doctrines is still in dispute, and there is not the same tangible evidence for them as for the existence of conscious human beings or animals. This upward extension is the subject of the present essay. Do beings exist with mental faculties markedly superior to those of man; and if so, are they related to man,—do they exert a controlling influence over him?

A survey of our planet gives us no clew to such beings; but few thinkers would dogmatically limit consciousness to the earth and deny its existence elsewhere, even where the physical conditions are similar to those here. However, if the possible habitation of

the celestial bodies be admitted, it must also be admitted that the mentality of the inhabiting beings may be higher than that of mundane creatures. Even with us evolution has not completed its course, and we hope for the eventual arrival of the "superman." May he not already have arrived among the inhabitants of other worlds; indeed, may not the quality of mental nature there evolved be of a character which admits of powers unattainable by us?

Assuming the possible existence, elsewhere, of beings with superior mental endowments, we must note, furthermore, that their physical aspect need not conform to that of *homo sapiens* or his brute companions. We are prone to picture the inhabitants of other worlds as about five feet eight inches in height, one hundred and fifty pounds in weight, possessed of two arms and two legs, and in general as beings copied from the models used in our drawing classes. In this, however, we are shooting wide from the mark. Considering the myriads of accidental variations which the process of evolution has used for stepping stones, it is about as likely that a man-like creature should once more result, in case evolution were repeated, as that a thousand peas, emptied from a bag, should twice come to occupy exactly the same positions on the floor.

With these qualifications, we may reasonably venture an affirmative answer to our first question, *i. e.*, whether higher beings exist. Not so with reference to the second,—whether we are related to these beings. How mentalities so far off in space should exert an influence on the inhabitants of this sphere, and especially a selective one, varying with the individual,

is difficult to comprehend. Before we have recourse to such a hypothesis, it seems best to return to the earth and exhaust the possibilities which are here presented.

On the earth, however, consciousness is confined to human beings and animals; and with this we seem brought to a standstill. But let us consider the problem for a moment, and demand a warrant for the discouraging limitation. In answer we are told that we have no evidence of consciousness elsewhere, that all other mundane objects are so unlike the animated beings of whose existence we are assured, both in their appearance and manifestations, that we must deny them the attributes of feeling and thinking. This, however, is an exemplification of the fallacy that if A is B, non-A is not B,—if human beings have legs, animals have none, if Parisians speak French, outsiders do not. The case is exactly parallel to that of illuminating contrivances, to borrow an example of Fechner's. A person acquainted only with candles and lamps might reason that a wick, attached to a fuel-furnishing mass, were the essential condition of artificial illumination; yet gas lights and electric arcs are constructed on different principles. Similarly, there may be centres of consciousness which do not exhibit the "wick and oil" of animal organization.

It is precarious to argue from external signs to inner consciousness. We speak of a parallelism between body and mind, the one forming a mirror or reflection of the other. However, the parallelism is lame and warped, and the mirror-like reflection as distorted as one could imagine. Zeal, despair, cheerful-

ness, and lethargy, for example, are radically different conditions, yet they are accompanied by almost identical bodily manifestations. There may be slight changes in the appearance and activities of some of the organs, but they are out of all proportion to the pronounced emotional disparities. In general, the physiological fluctuations which accompany our feelings are insignificant when compared with the reigning stability. What do my bones know of my sorrows and joys? Do my muscles become ennobled and shine with celestial light when my heart is uplifted with devotion? Do the members kaleidoscopically change shape when gleams of inspiration shoot through the mind? We speak of pouring out our soul, of becoming one with our friend, of melting with sympathy, or burning with enthusiasm, yet our body knows nothing of all these operations. It evinces the inner contrasts by signs so slight that they almost elude detection,—by microscopic protrusions of the lips, Lilliputian movements of the eyelashes.

In the case of sleep, especially, it is extravagant to speak of parallelism. Sleep is an absolute suspension of consciousness,—a negative contrasted with a positive, a zero in percentage opposed to the full hundred of waking existence. Does the bodily side correspond with this? Do all vital activities cease, all organs vanish away? The physiological differences between passive consciousness and sleep are so slight that they might not unfairly be expressed by the ratio of 100 : 95. A ratio, accordingly, of 100 to 95 on the one side and of 100 to 0 on the other! Could this be regarded as an accurate reflection?

But if all these inner changes take place with so poor an outer registration, have we a right to deny inner aspects to the phenomena of nature on the ground that they give no evidence thereof? May not the disproportion here be equally great, may we not be unable to recognize the soul-life simply because we have not learned to abstract the significant gestures and expressions out of the *débris* of meaningless movements? The indications of feeling in human beings constitute a language whose mastery required millions of years, and we are still at school, declining its nouns and conjugating its verbs. Is it not illogical, then, to assert that the inorganic phenomena about us are meaningless jingles, and that there are no languages save our own? Perhaps like the fly in the library we are crawling over the prophetic words of sublime, supra-human Bibles, while discoursing on the odd topography of the region we are traversing. If our own bodies were suddenly metamorphosed so as to form adequate expressions of the inner experiences, reflecting every shade of feeling with corresponding external variations, disappearing with the subsidence into sleep and springing into renewed being with the return of consciousness, we might fail to recognize them as the habitation of souls, but might imagine that we were dealing with wayward inorganic phenomena, resembling the caprices of smoke and fire.

Thus far we have been confining ourselves to external manifestations. Let us now pass to those inner ones on which, more than all others, the production of consciousness depends, and which have preferentially been singled out as the seat of thought and feeling,

psycho-physiologically speaking, namely, the manifestations of the brain. It is supposed by men of science that our consciousness has its physical counterpart not so much in the body as a whole as in the central organ of its nervous system. All the physical conditions necessary for the maintenance even of the highest states of mind are believed to reside in that soft, sponge-like substance beneath the skull. Now, it may be confidently asserted that nobody would, without previous information, regard the brain as the habitation of thought and emotion, even though he saw it in complete, living operation. Do plants, brooks, winds, and rocks evince less animation? Would one not as soon think of endowing them with sensibility as such an unmeaning clump of matter? Dare we authoritatively assert, then, that although the brain is the seat of a wonderful inner life, the inorganic world is dead and unfeeling; or that centres of consciousness like the brain cannot exist and function without encasement in bodies that jump and run? As well assert that conscious beings must possess nervous systems and special organs of sense, a proposition which is notoriously untrue.

So great are the disparities even in the animal kingdom that it is impossible to determine the limits beyond which sensibility may no longer arise. Consider the elephant, mouse, snake, mosquito, and amœba! What astounding variety in appearance and activity, with consciousness circulating through it all! In order to gain a full realization of the diversity, let us take the gaps that separate various groups of animals and give them novel points of application; let us note the

contrasts between widely divergent families, and by shifting their positions reveal the complete extent of the disparity.

To begin with the attributes of size, we have diminutive creatures like the ant as opposed to giants like the elephant and whale. All the graduations between these extremes easily fall within the range of perceptibility; all are subject to our visual control, as it were, and the differences between them do not seem remarkably great. To realize their magnitude, let us build them out from the larger extreme, substituting the whale for the ant, and constructing an imaginary animal that shall duplicate the relation of the extremes. It would cover an immense tract of land, with many cubic miles of matter, and might impress us but little as a being endowed with consciousness.

The same result would ensue from a comparison of animal movements. The differences are immense, as becomes evident when we consider the slow expansion and contraction of amœbas, the fixity of corals, the astounding leaps of certain insects, the rapid flight of birds and bees, and the sluggishness of some of the larger mammals. Especially noticeable is the difference in rapidity and extent of movement as compared to bodily size; and among the higher animals, at least, there seems to be a tendency toward a decrease in relative velocity with the increase in dimension. If, now, we were to transpose the difference in relative activity between a humming-bird and a sloth, substituting the sloth for the bird and our hypothetic animal for the sloth, it is questionable how much indication of life we might retain; possibly, indeed, the

resulting creature would seem fully as inert as the inorganic world.

The force of all this would be increased by considering the difference in the number of special senses and in general intelligence between man and the lower animals, and similarly transferring this upwards, thus obtaining beings with a dozen senses that we lack and with intellectual powers far transcending our own; it is questionable whether the sharp line of demarcation between organic and inorganic nature would remain under these conditions, and whether life might not sprout forth in numerous unsuspected corners Cogency is also added to these reasonings when we consider how certain creatures are only brought into contact with the inorganic or purely physiological aspects of their fellow-animals. Does the insect, alighting on the shell of the tortoise, find more life and sensibility in its resting-place than in the stone it has just left? Do the lice which infest animals recognize the hair among which they nest as the covering of keen sensations of pain and delight? Would the parasites that inhabit the internal organs of animal bodies come to the conclusion that the vital processes enveloping them were the basis of intelligence far exceeding the scope of their own? We can imagine the philosophically inclined among them debating whether the great universe inhabited by them—the body of the animal—were illumined by reason or operated by the blind laws of matter and motion. "Where does reason enter?" the skeptical ones would demand; "is not everything governed by the laws of nature, and are not these adequate to the task involved? Where is

the consciousness that guides the coursing of blood through this capillary? If we knew enough about the laws of our universe, we should find the speed of the blood's motion conditioned by the action of remoter parts, this again by the behavior of more distant regions, and so on, until finally we arrived at some central organ, where the conduct of the whole was regulated: all is purely mechanical, all can be explained by the laws of matter and motion, and design is nowhere apparent." However, in spite of the "mechanical" nature of the phenomena, consciousness and purpose do play a part, consciousness accompanying the phenomena, and purpose producing variations therein,—either indirectly, through operations which affect the heart's action, or directly, through friction or movement of the part inhabited by the parasite.

Suppose, now, we were to construct the relation between the parasite and the animal it inhabits with man at the lower end,—suppose we were to substitute man for the parasite,—what would be the aspect of the related being? Might it not bear some resemblance to the world we inhabit, with its currents of air and water, its vibrations of light and sound, and its attractions of gravity and magnetism? Here also it is disputed whether the phenomena with which we are surrounded are the result of blind laws of matter and motion or are conditioned by intelligence. May not the disjunction, however, be incomplete, may there not be a third alternative, namely, that they are the result both of adamantine laws and pliable intelligence? The movements of the vocal cords in man, too, are governed by unalterable physical and chemical laws, yet there may

be a meaning to them that will be hailed with delight by thousands of hearts, and the words they utter may rumble down the ages as with the sound of magnificent thunder.

Let us next consider the relations subsisting between various species of animals, and their influence upon one another. There is a thorough-going interdependence among members of the animal kingdom, and to a considerable degree the individuals affected are conscious of this: the fox knows that it is a living being which it is devouring and the chicken is aware that it is a fellow-animal by which it is attacked; the cat recognizes the dog as an enemy, and the dog its master as a friend and companion. Much of the influence of life upon life, however, remains hidden to the members affected. Thus, when the fish is caught in a net, it is not aware that it is the victim of a trick planned and executed by a fellow-animal. When the bird finds bread-crumbs strewn before the window, it fails to suspect that these were put there by sympathetic hands. And when we arrive at such low creatures as worms and caterpillars, and with sticks and other instruments mimic the action of inorganic objects on them, the very limitation of their faculties will prevent them from recognizing the manifestations of life. There are interactions of life, accordingly, in which the passive members fail to become aware of the active factors. Again transferring this relation upwards, and putting man into the place of the inferior animals, we shall likewise find him affected in numerous ways which seem accidental and unpurposive, but which are the manifestations of superhuman

hands and sticks. While apparently tossed about by the blind laws of fate and chance, he may be guided by beings of transcendent power.

We may conclude, accordingly, that the differences between human beings and inorganic nature may be no greater than those between the lower animals and ourselves; that as portions of nature—the higher organisms—which appear unanimated to their lower fellows are really imbued with consciousness, so also tracts of the inorganic world may belong to animated organisms far superior to ourselves; and that as the higher animals, and especially man, are able to exert a regulating influence over the lower ones, imperceptible to the latter as such, so our fortunes, too, may be controlled by overarching spiritual beings.

These beings are to be sought, not only in the perceptible world about us, but also in that which is imperceptible; for the universe as we know it probably does not represent, even approximately, the final, total reality. As Balfour says: "If the current doctrine of evolution be true, we have no choice but to admit that with the great mass of natural fact we are probably brought into no sensible relation at all. . . . For to suppose that a course of development carried out, not with the object of extending knowledge or satisfying curiosity, but solely with that of promoting life, on an area so insignificant as the surface of the earth, between limits of temperature and pressure so narrow, and under general conditions so exceptional, should have ended in supplying us with senses even approximately adequate to the apprehension of Nature in all her complexities, is to believe in a coincidence

more astounding than the most audacious novelist has ever employed to cut the knot of some entangled tale." [1]

Here, accordingly, we leave the earth, and again pass to the heavenly bodies that freckle our firmament, as likewise to those aspects of being of which, through the limitation of our faculties, we can form no conception; but which we surmise to surround and interpenetrate the world of our microscopes and telescopes. The planets and stars, too distant at first for any conscious interaction, may be more closely connected with us than we thought. Possibly, like the cells of the human body, they combine in the formation of mighty organisms, of which the stars are single members. Better, however, will it be altogether to discard the distinction between the earth and the rest of the universe, and to speak rather of the great body of unknown fact which fails to appear either here on this mundane sphere or yonder in the skies. The physical universe as we know it may be a distorted manifestation of the central reality. We may have connections of which we have never dreamed, may be surrounded by forms of life so strange that the fairyland of mythology, with its nymphs and fauns, its elves and giants, forms a truer approach to reality than the classification-tree of modern science; which, while affording us knowledge, threatens to shut us out of our paradise of yearning and aspiration.

"Yes, may!" is the answer; "all this may indeed be true, but what evidence have we that it is?

[1] Balfour, *The Foundations of Belief*, Longmans, Green and Co., New York and London, 1895, p. 69.

The mere possibility was apparent from the beginning, without all this detailed argument; but what are the considerations that will transform it into a solid probability?" To begin with, even a mere possibility is by no means to be scorned. For the common attitude of people toward the subjects considered—so far as it is not bound up with religious beliefs—is not one of neutrality, but of skepticism or hostility. To have wrested a "may be" from the disbelievers, accordingly, is a result well worth an essay.

But are we not justified in advancing beyond this? Will not a thorough appreciation of the possibility by itself lead over into the likelihood? This shifting of the burden of proof, this metamorphosis of defensive into offensive, is not new. Geology and evolution afford analogous cases. When geological theories were first propounded, the *onus probandi* must naturally have rested on the promulgators: it was for them to prove that the diversities of the earth's surface were really produced by the agents postulated in their theories. Today, however, after working ourselves into their point of view, after learning to observe the operation of the natural forces and compute their amounts during supposed ages of activity, we should find it difficult to conceive that the phenomena in question should not have been produced by the geological forces; it would remain to prove, not how mountains could have been chiselled and continents built, but how they could have avoided being so evolved. The theory of evolution, too, had a stubborn fight for several decades, and most rigorous demands were made of it in the way of proof. Having since been applied so suc-

cessfully in related fields, however, and become acclimated in the intellectual atmosphere of the people, its conclusions are difficult to escape; how species could remain constant, how they could avoid changing, would now be the difficult matter to comprehend. The tables have been turned, the apologists have become the aggressors, and the burden of proof has fallen on the shoulders of the opponents.

Similar is the case before us. Endeavoring to render plausible the existence of heterogeneous spiritualities, we are challenged to prove our statements and transform our impotent possibility into a solid probability. But will not an adequate realization of the possibility by itself effect the desired transformation? Will not some, at least, of our numerous seeds of speculation fall into the fruitful soil of reality? The poverty of our experience and limitation of our outlook already furnish the strongest presumption in favor of the truth of our supposition. If a man regards the universe as a comfortable two-story residence, with earth for the ground floor, heaven for the second story, and hell for the basement, it is not surprising that skepticism concerning the habitation of the upper story and cellar should end in the conviction that he himself, with his poodles and canaries, were the sole tenant of creation. But if he draws aside his curtains and views the mansions lining the avenues, if he looks beyond and catches glimpses of fields and woods, with smoke curling up from the hamlets, and song and perfume greeting him from every direction, he begins to suspect that there may be further life stirring about him. It makes the greatest difference

whether we choose the Ptolemaic view of the universe, —according to which we form the centre of things, about which everything else revolves,—or adopt the theory of Copernicus, which teaches us that we are the merest little stitch on the garment of reality. Most of us, it is true, have accepted the Copernican doctrine in the astronomical sense, but from the broader cosmological point of view we are still predominantly the adherents of Ptolemy: we still believe that the phenomena we know well-nigh exhaust all possible aspects of being, and deny the existence of melodies which do not adapt themselves to the meagre harmonies of our mental accordions.

When we consider the enormous wealth of the universe, the undiscovered realms that undoubtedly encompass us, many layers thick, the poverty of our intellect, and its inability to cope with the problems of existence; when we see how living beings exist around and within us of mental grades so low that they cannot distinguish between ourselves and inorganic nature; when we reason that we may be similarly situated in relation to still higher grades of being,—the proposition that there are spiritual forces of whose existence we are ignorant, and which have a relation to and influence over us, loses its hypothetical character, and its bare possibility solidifies into a firm probability. As in the cases of geology and evolution, we are tempted to fling back the burden of proof on the shoulders of the skeptic, and to demand whether the doubt in these things is not rather the aggressive step, which requires a supporting warrant. If I shoot once at a target, the chances are that I shall not hit the

bull's-eye unless I am a practised shot; and to convince a bystander of the contrary requires some positive reason in support. But if I shoot a thousand times, he must furnish the reason who asserts that I shall never hit it. Similarly, it is incumbent on the skeptic to back his statements with proof, who declares that animals and men are the only lucky shots in the universe, and that all others are destined to fail in their attempts to hit the bull's-eye of consciousness.

The theory thus developed is connected with no special religious creed or theological dogma, and the objections which might be made to it on that score are without force. There are many people who bristle with opposition as soon as they scent the word God, —opposition based on the improbability of miracles, the disagreement between the sects, the contradictions in the Bible, the evil in the world, and similar grounds. However, such objections are futile with reference to the doctrine of higher spiritual beings set forth in the preceding pages, but only have validity against special forms of that doctrine. The conclusions reached are compatible with almost any form of belief or unbelief, the freest as well as the most stringent; they are compatible, in fact, with any creed except that which expressly denies them.

Our inquiry was a special investigation into concrete matters of fact, comparable to any of the ordinary investigations of science. It was merely an inquiry into the extension of consciousness upwards from man, not essentially different from that which attempts to define and bound it below him, in the realm of protists. With ultimate questions as to the nature and

government of the universe it had nothing to do; and arguments based on ultimate conceptions cannot affect its conclusions. Whether there are only a few grades of mentality above man or many, whether or not there is a central being who might be designated as God, whether God is a personal or an impersonal being, whether he is actuated solely by love, whether he is omnipotent or opposed by an Ahriman of rival power,—all are questions which transcend the scope of the inquiry; all can be answered in various ways and still remain compatible with its principal conclusions.

At present we shall not enter into these matters. But there is one question with a deep emotional interest on which it may be well to add a word. It is the problem of immortality. This, like the other subjects alluded to, is not directly involved in the principal conclusions of our inquiry; these could be true and yet the question might receive a negative or an affirmative answer. Nevertheless it would seem as if the establishment of the conclusions would also strengthen the probability of immortality. For a locus and outlet of human souls would thereby be gained; and as the conscious realm of the universe expanded and approached co-extension with the material, the probability would also grow that the indestructibility characteristic of the latter obtained of the former as well. As to the nature of the future existence, even speculation, of course, has no spectroscopes keen enough to yield definite information. However, the general upward tendency of life, and the salutary, purgative nature of much of the existing evil, would seem to warrant

that on the whole it will be no worse than the present life, while very likely it will even be better. The words of Emerson are appropriate in this connection:—

"All the comfort I have found teaches me to confide that I shall not have less in times and places that I do not yet know. I have known admirable persons, without feeling that they exhaust the possibilities of virtue and talent. I have seen what glories of climate, of summer mornings and evenings, of midnight sky; I have enjoyed the benefits of all this complex machinery of arts and civilization, and its results of comfort. The good Power can easily provide me millions more as good. . . . All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. Whatever it be which the great Providence prepares for us, it must be something large and generous, and in the great style of his works. The future must be up to the style of our faculties,—of memory, of hope, of imagination, of reason." [1]

[1] Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims,* Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston, 1894, p. 320.

THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AFTER LIFE

THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AFTER LIFE

THE human body is the inveterate obstacle to a belief in immortality. How can we continue to exist when our physical substratum is destroyed? Under what form shall we picture the soul after it is divorced from its material support?

The tacit presupposition underlying these doubts is, that the body really brings us into contact with the spirit, and that in its manifestations we really see and feel spirit. A disintegration of the one, accordingly, answers to a disintegration of the other. The presupposition, however, is fallacious. Body is not synonymous with soul. We approach no nearer to mentality in the most expressive countenance than in the heaviest clod of earth.

Imagine four human figures lying side by side, exactly alike in form and expression. The one is a wax figure, the other a corpse, the third is a sleeping individual, and the fourth a poet illumined by quiet but ecstatic inspiration. In the first case there never was any consciousness, nor will there ever be any; in the second its possibility was there, but has irrevocably departed. In the third sensibility is potential—ready at any moment to break forth into actuality—while in the fourth it is at a white heat, the mind fairly blazing with vivid emotion and imagery. From the exterior there is exact similarity: a bird could not dis-

tinguish between the figures, nor could a human being at a moderate distance. Yet what an astounding divergence of inner life! Does not this one example forcibly illustrate the elusiveness of spirit and the hopeless inability of our mind to lay hold of its essence? Is it not clear that we could keep dipping throughout eternity into the realm of physiological manifestation without ever seizing the prize of mentality?

"But," it may be retorted, "your case is fanciful; human beings do not remain motionless for any length of time: they stir about, make gestures, give communicative signs; and it is here that we come into contact with the soul."

To be sure, no life actually completes its course in a position of quiet meditation; yet there is no reason why it might not conceivably do so. The amount and rapidity of an organism's motion, and the proportion between the periods of rest and those of activity, are variable, unessential matters. Compare the inert chameleon with the restless goldfish, the stationary coral with the roaming bird of passage! The period of bodily quiescence, accompanied by mental activity, may be a minute or an hour in length,—it matters not. And if it lasts sixty minutes there is no reason why it might not last sixty times sixty, or in fact cover as many years or centuries. The point is, that there *is* hidden, elusive sensibility, which no amount of physical examination succeeds in bringing to view.

But accepting the objection at its full force, we still find our thesis valid. Motion brings us no nearer to spirit than inert matter. The somnambulist performs movements fully as purposive as his waking neigh-

bor. The sleeper, without being aware of the fact, responds to external stimulations with appropriate reactions. The epileptic unconsciously goes through the most violent activities. On the other hand a mere quiver of the lips or a tear in the eye may be the expression of vivid inner experiences. The wrinkling of the brow may be more suggestive of feeling than the strides of the athlete. And the immovable poet, to recur to our original case, may be experiencing the deepest emotions of all. We may have violent movements with but little mentality, and delicate ones with a good deal. We may have movement without feeling, and feeling without movement.

Motion, in short, as embodied in the expressive, communicative activities of animals and men, is merely a language, whose words we have empirically learned to understand. There is no more essential connection between this language and the consciousness it brings to view than there is between the philologist's parts of speech and the objects they denote. A long word may stand for an insignificant thing, a short word for something important; random concatenations of syllables signify nothing at all, while numerous aspects of nature and life have no verbal expression whatever. So, likewise, with the visible manifestations of life. They, too, are mere arbitrary signs or labels, which experience has taught us to comprehend. They do not bring us into contact with the things they stand for, and it is not precluded that there may be other dialects, or, to continue the metaphor, that thought may exist without formulation at all. We resemble the backwoodsman who has never heard a foreign

language, and who cannot comprehend the possibility of uttering thoughts by sounds to which he is unaccustomed. "Sweet" and "sour" seem connected with their respective tastes by some cosmic necessity. The possibility of interchanging these words and saying "sour" when we mean "sweet," is as remote to his imagination as that of turning time about and putting the future before the past.

So then, neither the bodies of men nor their expressive activities bring us into contact with their spirit. Human beings are fully as mysterious as ghosts; indeed, as Carlyle has observed, they are ghosts. The motion of my hand is as much of a riddle as the wonders reported by spiritualists. We merely happen to have caught the meaning of certain manifestations of sensibility, we have deciphered the Rosetta Stone which has given us the key to the hieroglyphics of human expressive and communicative signs. But we are not justified, as a consequence, in denying the reality of different systems of verbal expression, metaphorically speaking, and in asserting that our single language of bodily and facial movements, with the related dialects of the brute world, is the only possible avenue of communication, that thought cannot find utterance in other tongues, or that it is unable to exist without encasement in bodily language. In short and without figurative embellishment, the traditional limitation of sensibility to the manifestations of human beings and animals is totally unwarranted; the fact that traces of animation are evident nowhere else by no means justifies us in concluding that there can be no such animation. Hence human souls, too, may con-

ceivably exist after the dissolution of the body, even though we possess no positive evidence that such is the case.

Yet the miracle seems too great for acceptance; the arguments may find verbal assent, yet there is an inveterate unwillingness to postulate a continuance of human personality when every vestige of it has disappeared. To soften this unwillingness, it might be well to point out that nature is daily performing feats that are equally miraculous. Imagine the earth containing but a single form of vegetable life—an apple tree—represented by a single specimen. This solitary tree dies. Now show the inconsolable populace an apple seed and declare that another blossoming tree shall soon replace the one that was lost: what will be their reception of this well-meant consolation? Will they not skeptically shake their heads, or scoff and sneer? And in fact, does it not border on the miraculous that so small a particle of matter should contain such possibilities within its tiny limits? And how about the transmission of life in the animal kingdom? Does it not silence all skepticism to observe the body and spirit of a father lodging in the recesses of the semen and blossoming forth, twenty years later, in a similar physique and character, even down to the minutest details?

It may be objected that these analogies are not accurate, that a new individual here replaces the old, while a genuine correspondence would demand a transformation and rejuvenation of the original being. The purpose of the illustrations, however, is not to furnish exact parallels, but to indicate marvels equally great,

thus rendering more acceptable the miracle of a survival after death. For the wonder does not lie in the fact that the same individual is transformed or a similar one produced, but in the disproportion between the antecedent and the consequent, and the apparent inadequacy of the former to account for the latter. As a matter of fact, however, we have exact analogues of the soul's immortality; or say rather of its survival, for we are not concerned primarily with the eternity, but with the reality of the after life: once assure us of another existence and we shall willingly postpone the question as to its duration. The first analogue is to be found in the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly. Here we see an individual dying, as it were, and passing into another state of being. From the point of view of the human observer, to be sure, the transformation is perfectly natural, but from that of the caterpillar it must seem fully as incomprehensible as our own supposed continuation after death.

The same is true of the second analogy, embodied in the birth of the human baby. Were the fœtus able to philosophize, the hour of birth would undoubtedly appear synonymous with that of dissolution: its warm, comfortable habitation is abandoned and it is severed from the source of its strength and being. What else but death, annihilation can it mean? What conception of the future life and of its subsequent development into an adult can it have?

In these cases we have a physical continuity. A conscious or mental connection is yielded by memory. Memory is an immortality in miniature. The event in which we have participated does not pass away, like

an impression on a rubber ball, but leaves its trace behind; and years after may still be recalled, if not with the full vigor of an initial impression, at least in the softened form of a mental image. The significance of memory is heightened by the results of psychological investigation, which indicate that there is a good deal slumbering in the folds of our brain of which we are not aware, and which have led some thinkers to declare that nothing is ever quite forgotten. It is also heightened by those moments of poetic inspiration in which we seem to grasp in one thought occurrences covering years of time, and to be lifted to the threshold of higher realms of being. The suggestion is forcibly impressed, at such times, that we are in fact living near the borderland of hidden states of existence, and that death may rend the curtain which prevents us from beholding their radiance. In memory the past returns to us in fragments, in the moments of inspiration it is united into significant vistas: may not death effect a still further transformation, lifting into the full glare of daylight what is here merely experienced in a dream?

As a final guarantee of immortality, underlying every other consideration, we must refer to the vastness and mystery of the cosmos, which yields so ample a playground for miraculous transformations of being. A philosopher of the Middle Ages, growing skeptical as to the contents of revealed religion, might have found it difficult to believe in heterogeneous realms of spirit. His universe was a little yard, observable and measurable from end to end; there were no infinite abysses of space, no untold possibilities of sensation arising from changes in the psychological conditions

of perception. What he saw constituted the bulk of creation, and the rest was a mere "fringe," not markedly different from the regions in which he lived. Our universe, on the contrary, is an immeasurable forest, with depths and caverns into which human eye has never peered. The mediæval reasoner, with his barnyard outlook, might have found it difficult to believe in the mysterious forms of transcendental being, but for the modern their existence demands no intellectual strain. Indeed, it would be miraculous to traverse the endless forests of the All and find them uninhabited: the wonder would be, to find consciousness restricted to the little point of our sensible appreciation, the oceanic isle which we inhabit, instead of covering the whole extent of the universe. It would lead us too far to indicate, even superficially, the untold possibilities of being, imperceptible not only through our spatial limitations but also through our ignorance of the forces most closely surrounding and interpenetrating us. A perusal of Crookes' Address before the Society for Psychical Research (1897), and of the chapter on *Natural Supernaturalism* in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus,* will give some idea of the immeasurable extent of the forest.

The possibility of an after life must then be assumed. The manifestations of the human body bring us no closer to the spirit than those of inorganic nature: they constitute a mere system of signs,— a language which associatively points to certain spiritual facts, but which by no means precludes the existence of other systems, or of unembodied sensibility. The development of vegetables and animals is fully as miraculous as the

survival of human souls, while the metamorphosis of caterpillars and the birth of animals afford actual instances of physical immortality (or survivals of death), which are psychically matched by the phenomena of memory. In the richness and mystery of the universe, finally, we have a locus, a field of action, for those transformations of being whose possibility the foregoing considerations have endeavored to establish.

MENTAL OVERTONES

MENTAL OVERTONES

IT is a commonplace of psychology that our experiences are not to be regarded as impressions created anew and complete with every occurrence; they are influenced largely by our past experiences, memories of which cast their rays into the present and give it color and significance. The situation is like that in a verbal sentence, where a word near the end gains much of its import from the words which have gone before. Consider the following sentences:

He saw a penny on the ground which had evidently been lost.

The child burst into tears as it realized that it was lost.

The dying man moaned as he felt that his soul was irretrievably lost.

What is the reason for the difference in effect of the final word? Clearly the influence of the preceding words. And not only this, but there will be a further difference, according to the previous experiences of the person reading the sentences. Thus the second sentence may ordinarily not arouse much emotion; but if it is a fond mother who reads it,—a mother who is concerned about the welfare of her own little child,—the words of the sentence may produce a slight reverberation of sympathy; while the third sentence may actually produce an emotion akin to terror in the heart

of one who has recently been tortured with doubts as to his salvation. Here too it is the memory of what has gone before that produces the effect.

We know with what delight a friend will recite some interesting passage from a novel, illustrating a peculiar trait of one of the characters. Yet though we smile sympathetically, we fail to derive the same pleasure as our friend. Why is this? It is because we receive the passage merely by itself, while our friend sees it with its long background of previous events in the story. The humorous trait—it may be—which is illustrated, has occurred dozens of times in the previous pages, and it is the cumulative effect of all these foregoing passages which "plays along" and gives such a delightful quality to the words in question. This, likewise, is the explanation of the overpowering effect produced by the tragic conclusions of certain novels,—like *Madame Bovary* or *Regina.* It is not the last chapter by itself that moves us, but the last chapter with all the preceding chapters crowding into it. For this reason, likewise, it is practically impossible to produce a similarly powerful effect by means of a short story. There is not enough background to give weight to the words, no matter how ingenious the story or masterly its handling.

And to take another illustration from the realm of the novel, it is familiar with what solicitude we follow the career of the hero, while remaining unmoved by the vicissitudes of the secondary characters. In some novels, like "Treasure Island," almost all the characters suffer death, yet we are indifferent if only the hero comes out alive. Is this because his career

is so much more valuable? By no means. It is only because we have followed his career from the beginning. It has a background. Its events are connected with one another by an invisible thread, and there is a cumulative effect which is not present in the case of the other characters. These seem to cross the path of the hero at all angles. We know not whence they come, and we care not whither they go. But assuredly, these characters have histories that are interesting as well, and a substitution for the hero would at once bring this fact to view: the new courses of events would now assume importance, while the other would leave us cold. It would be a psychological experiment of the highest interest to write a novel, and then take each of the secondary characters and make it the center of a new story. The result would be a baffling shifting of interest, and it would become apparent how complex and subject to point of view the realm of human experience really is.

The writer some years ago published an essay in which the foregoing principles were developed at some length, the attempt being made to explain the bewildering relativity of standards in the realms of beauty and morality.[1] The following is a sentence from this essay:

"The associations of an object, the circumstances and feelings in connection with which it has been experienced, are an important factor in its nature and meaning. They are packed into it as the overtones of a fundamental are merged into its timbre."

[1] *The Fluctuations of Beauty and Morality,* in *Racial Contrasts,* G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1908.

This simile of the overtones, indeed, is of great value, and we shall use it repeatedly in the present essay. Now, in music the overtones are the elements which contribute timbre to a tone; and corresponding to them in life, the revived past experiences of an object or event, clustering about the latter, are responsible for much of its emotional value. If the name or sight of a person who insulted us causes our heart to beat faster, this is because the memory of certain past experiences connected with that person is aroused and chimes along. And if a decorated Christmas tree or the smell of a cup of coffee arouses poetic sentiments, it is because the recollection of youthful experiences in connection with the tree and cosy chats over the cup of coffee are likewise aroused and shed their influence on the object perceived.

Now, the musical overtones have been scientifically examined, measured, and explained. We know what overtones are operative when we hear a tone with a certain timbre, and we likewise know what timbre to expect when we are given a series of overtones. Some tones have no overtones at all, others have only a few, and others still a great many. Trumpets have high overtones, whence their piercing effect; clarinets owe their tonal quality to the presence of the odd members only in the overtone series; and so on through the entire list of instruments. This being the situation in the realm of tones, the thought naturally suggests itself: would it not be advantageous to submit the mental overtones to a similar analysis and systematization? Here, too, there must be laws of arrangement

and operation, and it behoves us, as psychologists, to fathom the nature of these laws.

The timbre of a tone has been found to depend on the number, arrangement, and intensity of the overtones. The mental overtones vary in somewhat similar ways: we have differences in the number, temporal arrangement, and quality of the experiences which are focussed into the present perception. "The boyhood friend has touched our life at more points than has our acquaintance of last summer, and the timbre of emotion which his presence arouses is different. The Christmas tree greets our eyes at widely separated intervals, and there is a freshness of feeling accompanying its perception which is not present in the case of the elm before the door that we see every day. The holiday bells, the funeral wreath, the wedding ceremony, the quiet of Sunday, differ in the nature of the concomitant feelings, and this divergence ever after imparts a characteristic tinge."

It is a matter of importance, indeed, to shed light on this mysterious subject. We must throw the spectroscope of investigation on the feelings which envelop our perceptions, and analyze them into the past experiences of which they are composed. Will this ever be possible? Is it within the power of the human mind to take a feeling and analyze it into the hundreds or thousands of preceding experiences which contribute to its nature? A difficult task, to be sure. Yet it is not for men of science to give up before making an attempt. The very example of the spectroscope, which analyzes a seemingly homogeneous ray of light into its

constituent colors, and even shows us what elements are present in the stars, ought to inspire us with confidence. And how is it with the musical overtones? Hiding in the matrix of sound, they have likewise been extricated, and are now compelled to emerge at the summons of the detecting resonator. May it not be possible to invent psychical spectroscopes and resonators as well, which will search out the hidden components of our feelings? Indeed, have not the hypnotic trance and Freudian analysis already accomplished marvels in bringing to view the buried substrata of our mental life? And even though a complete analysis may not be within reach, it must surely be possible to throw a certain amount of light on the subject. To borrow again from the essay in question, we may refer to the fads and fancies with which people fill their spare hours. A rare coin and a rare stamp may claim a moment's interest from most of us, but it is only the collector who is thrilled by the sight of these articles. Why is he thrilled, while we are not? It is because a whole history of previous experiences is tapped in his case, while we perceive the objects without background. And the normal course of experiences is much alike with all collectors. At first there is an incipient interest. This swells and grows, being stimulated when specimens are obtained and thwarted when they are not. Finally a culmination of interest is reached, after which the fad begins to weaken again, until at last it dies off into indifference. It would be easy to represent the process graphically. And the quality of feeling and interest aroused by a particular specimen does not depend primarily on this specimen

as such, but rather on the point in the process at which it is introduced, and thus on the number and kind of previous experiences which are crowded into it. And so with other aspects of life as well. These also depend on previous experiences, and analysis ought to succeed in throwing considerable light on their elusive nature.

What would be the value of such insight? A question which ought not to be asked by men of science. It is truth we are after, and truth need present no certificate of utility for its credentials. Furthermore, who can tell in what unexpected ways a truth may not suddenly become valuable? Few things would seem to have less practical worth than the investigation of beats and overtones as prosecuted by Helmholtz. Yet it is easy to see of what immense value the results might be in the invention of the telephone. In fact, we know that Bell actually studied the writings of Helmholtz while working on his invention, and it may well be that the insight he gained was of assistance in arriving at his results. Again, what practical value would one at first sight detect in the psychological tests which are more and more coming into vogue? They make the impression of mere parlor games,—material for an evening's pastime and nothing more. Yet we may live to see the day when they will have developed into a means of diagnosing a person's character and abilities, and through fitting him for the proper vocation and sphere of life, adding immensely to his happiness and economic output.

One result of our investigation was already pointed out in the essay above referred to. Knowledge of the

"overtone-series" operative in our æsthetic effects would give us absolute formulæ of what constitutes beauty,—in so far as beauty depends on associations of the kind mentioned above. The reason why we are baffled by the bewildering heterogeneity of the objects which are called beautiful in different parts of the world, is because we confine our examination too exclusively to the objects as such, without considering their connections with the past. It is as if we were to take a rare coin and a stamp, and to try and account for the similar effect produced on the respective collectors by something which their shape or color had in common. We could analyze the objective aspects of the articles till doomsday, without finding that secret element which they share, and which awakens such characteristic emotions in the minds of the collectors. And the true secret of the matter is evident to one who has read the preceding paragraphs: the articles produce similar effects because they are the condensation of similar series of past experiences. A graphical representation of these experiences would at once make this clear. While the objects themselves are different, the series of preceding experiences are the same. But the same object with and without preceding experiences,—*i. e.*, as seen by a collector and a non-collector, —would at once become apparent as different in spite of the objective similarity. In some such way it would be possible to explain many of the diversities of taste in different countries and historical periods. Like the coin and the stamp, æsthetic objects which show great differences from an objective point of

view might be similar with reference to their backgrounds of previous experience, and a description of these backgrounds, as suggested, would give us absolute formulæ for æsthetic effects.

All this is perfectly clear, and ought by itself to furnish a sufficient incentive toward the investigation we are suggesting. But our inquiry will lead us further. Here, to be sure, we shall soon leave the ground of verifiable fact. So far, what we have brought forward is based on solid experience, and it is only the difficulty of analysis, not any inherent uncertainty as to the results, that prevents us from arriving at the desired conclusions. Not so with what follows. This will lead us out of the realm of solid experience into that of speculation. However, it is not for that reason to be condemned. For just as the apparently trivial and useless has often turned out to be valuable, so the fanciful and imaginary has likewise been found to be true.

The value and significance of our perceptions, we have said, depend largely on the traces of past experiences which cluster about them. Hundreds or thousands of experiences, reaching back through years of time, may thus be represented in a single feeling or perception. And by means of these, in a way, we really "span" the occurrences or experiences from which they were derived. Let us suppose, for example, that we have seen a certain person once a week for a year. Graphically it will be easy to represent this by means of fifty-two little circles placed side by side,—ever diminishing in size until the last one is of the tiniest

dimensions. If, now, we were to press these circles together, like a spring, and enclose them in the present perception of the person in question,—which might be represented by a big circle,—we should actually have a miniature, although distorted, representation of all these fifty-two experiences. That is, we should abortively be spanning a year of time, so far as our contact with that person was concerned. Of course, it is unlikely that a sweep of perception covering a year's time would confine itself to a single, narrow line of objects, like the contacts with the person in question. Instead, it would spread out extensively to either side, and take in a multitude and variety of objects. And so, too, our miniature representation of a longer period, if it is to correspond to the actual contents of such a period, must be of a rounded nature, and contain traces of a great number and variety of experiences. This condition seems to be fulfilled in works of art (including literature). It is a characteristic of such works to embody a multitude of associations. Poems which reproduce the poetic effects of nature give a wealth of details converging on the desired effect. And pictures frequently make use of the same device. The representation of typical characters in novels or paintings, especially, presupposes the acquaintance with a great number of individuals of whom the type is a sort of summary; and it is the unconscious reference to all these individuals on which the recognition of the type depends. Indeed, the associational awakening of previous experiences is one of the most characteristic features of art, and has even

been invoked by some æstheticians as an almost sufficient explanation of æsthetic effects. Hence it may well be that the thrills of art are the token of a miniature representation like that mentioned. We cannot prove it, but there is nothing absurd or fantastic about the notion.

We may now ask: are there any minds in the universe which actually take in longer periods of time at a stroke; and if there are, may there be a connection between the same and the abortive, miniature representations spoken of? May these latter be a mirror of the larger mental sweeps? Assuredly, it is not only possible, but even probable, that there should be minds of this character. Von Baer has written an interesting essay on this subject, and Royce has treated the matter as a serious possibility in his *World and the Individual*. The fact that we directly span only a few seconds of time is no guarantee that this is true of all other sentient beings as well. We know of animals whose lives only cover a few hours, while others live a century. May not their conscious "span" show considerable differences as well? Our minds are adapted to the surroundings wherein we live, and different surroundings will naturally require different adaptations. Indeed, there is no reason whatever, on general principles, why there may not be mentalities in the universe whose perceptual span is confined to periods as short as the vibrations of light of which physics teaches, while others may cover hundreds or thousands of years.

But might there be a connection between such minds

and our own, and might this involve the "overtones" of which we have been speaking? That there is a connection between various realms of consciousness is a familiar view. Indeed, it is involved in all religious systems which posit the existence of beings above man. To be sure, in some cases the connection is supposed to be merely external, like that between an artificer and the mechanism he has created; but in others it is more intimate, and our existence is supposed to emanate directly from the superior beings, or even to form a part thereof. The mystics have experiences which seem to corroborate such an intimate dependence and interpenetration. Fechner has worked out a view of the world according to which the content of our lives is taken up into the experience of higher beings. And according to James the subconscious in our minds connects us with vaster realms of spirit. There is nothing new, accordingly, about the theory of an interconnection of conscious realms. In fact, it seems difficult to avoid some such conclusion, if there are to be any higher realms of spirit at all.

And now the final question must be put: may our mental overtones be connected somehow with those higher beings which we have posited, may they furnish us with a clew as to their nature and the conditions under which they live?

Here we shall have recourse again to the subject of overtones. A tone, we know, produces a single, homogeneous impression. And by means of the overtones which are present in it, but which are not separately heard, it acquires a certain quality or timbre.

But this is not all. The overtones really foreshadow and form the basis of something much broader and richer than the mere tone, *i. e.,* of a musical chord or harmony. In fact, the overtone series, when reproduced by means of separate tones, gives us two of the most important harmonies in music, *i. e.,* the major triad and the chord of the dominant seventh, and it is plausible that the fundamental nature of these harmonies is due to this very fact, namely, that they are present already in the root-tone as partials. Now, what we are trying to bring home is something analogous to this. As the partials which constitute timbre foreshadow something much broader and richer than the single tone, *i.e.,* a complete harmony, so the mental overtones which produce emotional timbre may possibly stand for experiences that are much wider and grander than the feeling or perception in which they are contained. They, too, may be the miniature representation of something which is as much superior to any single experience as a rich chord is superior to a tone.

Have we any positive considerations that this is true? Not many, we must confess; but enough to serve as a basis of investigation.

We said above that art was the realm of human experience which was especially rich in associational overtones. And art is that field of experience which more than most others seems to point to an existence beyond our own. We are speaking, now, of art as it really grips the individual and sends him soaring on the wings of inspiration,—not of that realm of

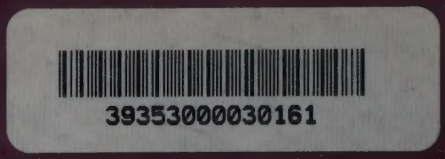
mere objective perception or criticism beyond which many people do not seem to go. To the person who is genuinely carried away by a great work of art, it seems indeed as if the portals of hidden, resplendent realms of being were opened. Music, especially, and the solitary communion with nature—which is akin to the enjoyment of art—are rich in these effects. Sometimes, indeed, it seems as if we were actually transported to other periods of time, a peculiar impression being aroused as if the past were with us again. We shall not undertake to describe the experiences in question. For those who have had them, our mere reference is enough: they know. As for the others, no amount of explanation would bring home what they have not been privileged to experience. They are blind to a certain aspect of life, and it is in vain to try and make them realize what they are unable to see. At most, we can point out that many men of genius have, in fact, had the experiences of which we speak, and have referred to them as yielding peculiar, valuable insights. It is a commonplace to read of art as a revelation or a form of worship, and to have Beauty placed by the side of Virtue and Truth as a manifestation of the Divine. To be sure, the words in which this is expressed are often used in a somewhat figurative sense. The artist does not literally mean all that he says, although it is probable that he is kept from ascribing reality to his words merely because he sees no way of supporting logically what he feels in his soul. Yet in other cases the assertions are made in all seriousness: it is really held that art reveals trans-

cendent realms of being,—not merely figuratively, but actually. Schiller speaks as if he had something like this in mind, and Schopenhauer clearly ascribes a deeper reality to art than to the world of sense. Art, according to him, reveals the Platonic Ideas, which in turn are the immediate manifestations of the World-will; and music even has the exalted function of manifesting this Will directly and immediately, and thus possesses a more genuine reality than anything else in the world. Our hypothesis would account for the significance which men like Schiller and Schopenhauer find in art, and would offer a point of union for the thrills which they feel and the transcendent realms of being which those thrills suggest.

And now let us sum up the situation once more, and bring our argument to a focus in a thoroughgoing analogy. On the one hand we have isolated tones, covering but a single step on the extensive ladder of pitch; on the other we have perceptions or experiences, of temporal lengths as limited as the tonal pitch. Tones are characterized by peculiarities of timbre, experiences by emotional colorings which are strikingly analogous to timbre. Tonal timbre is due to the presence of numerous "partials", which are not perceived separately, but manifest themselves through the change of quality which they impart. And "emotional timbre" is due to the coöperation of numerous past experiences, which likewise have no separate existence, but merely give color to the experience. By careful listening it is sometimes possible to catch some of the constituent partials and gain a faint adumbration of

the harmony which they compose; and for delicately attuned individuals it is likewise possible to seize echoes, as it were, of happenings which far transcend the present moment and reach back to the distant past.

It remains to ask, now, whether the parallel will hold in regard to the remaining feature as well, on which our discussion hinges. The partials in music, we have seen, are shadowy representations of chords or harmonies which actually exist. Are the mental overtones likewise the abortive representations of temporally enlarged experiences which exist, and which immeasurably transcend the perceptions in which they are held? We cannot give a positive answer. But the analogy is so striking in other respects that we are tempted to allow its extension to this feature as well. While there is no proof that there are enlarged temporal sweeps in the universe of which our "overtone-feelings" are miniature copies, we are justified in adopting this supposition as a hypothesis, which awaits investigation on the part of men of science.


39353000030161